Until I Met You

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Until I Met You

by Dormchi

Summary

“I apologize for my brother’s rudeness,” Hannibal says, holding the door for both detectives and then closing it behind them. “He knew I was expecting you.”

“Lieutenant--” Will starts.

“Please, call me Hannibal.”

Will doesn’t think he’s going to get used to the way Hannibal smiles with just his eyes. He takes a seat at the desk and Bev takes the one to his left. “Hannibal. A married couple was found dead in their home late last night.”

Detective Will Graham needs an expert and Fire Lieutenant Hannibal Lecter happens to be available. Basically this is just arson, murder, coffee, and fluff.

Notes

The beast that I've been working on for weeks now! I've decided to start posting a chapter a week. This started as a oneshot inspired by the fire station that I drive by on my way to work. There's a cop car parked out front nearly every morning and I thought it would be cute if the cop was bringing coffee to one of the firefighters. And then what started out as a short cute smut fic turned into something with actual story and plot without my permission.

I imagine Will as 31 in this and Hannibal as 39. Also, Mischa is a guy! I thought male!Mischa would be a fun twist. I blame it on the fact that I watched Backdraft when I was brainstorming ideas for this. So many brother feels.

Unbeta'd! If you see any big mistakes, please poke me on Tumblr and let me know.

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1

Will starts nearly every day the same way he's starting this one: with making coffee. He scoops eight tablespoons of Classic Roast into his coffee maker and eyeballs the amount of water he adds, because the numbers meant to help him measure have long since worn away. There are a few long moments where he stares intensely at the coffee pot, wondering why it hasn't started percolating; then he curses softly and presses the button to start it.

To his credit, he barely slept and the sun isn't out yet. If anyone asked him to do anything more complicated than this, he'd probably only be able to growl in response.

He rubs at his eyes for a solid two minutes after he starts it, only then becoming aware of the clammy feel of cold sweat on his chest, plastering his t-shirt to his skin. That's strange, really, because he changed his shirt in the middle of the night and vividly remembers going back to bed with dry bath towels in hand and a clean, dry shirt covering him. What this might mean, he thinks, is that he's gone from a sweating mess only during his nightmares to a sweating mess all the time. Attractive.

Will watches the coffee pot slowly start to fill, decides that staring at it isn't going to make it produce coffee any faster, and walks towards the bathroom. He strips off his sweaty t-shirt and drops it into the hamper in the laundry room as he passes by. It's one of four shirts that were deposited in as many days after being drenched in night terror induced sweat.

The water in his apartment gets blessedly hot, but only stays that way for ten minutes, fifteen if it's very early or very late. He makes it a quick shower, working shampoo into his hair, lathering up with body wash, and tugging his cock a few times with a loose, soapy grip. There is no stirring there, it's just too early in the morning for him to feel anything besides the desire to be dead rather than awake, and he finishes his shower just as the temperature of the water starts to turn tepid.

Will briefly considers shaving, but the smell of coffee beckons him away from the bathroom mirror.

He walks back into the kitchen with a towel around his waist and pours himself a cup of coffee in a chipped souvenir mug that Beverly brought him after her last trip to Las Vegas a

year ago. He downs three cups of coffee in ten minutes as he meanders around the kitchen, throwing two pieces of bread into the toaster and cracking open his laptop to check whatever breaking news might have popped up overnight.

In between skimming an article about a massive landslide in Peru that somehow only killed one cow and sipping on the tail end of his fourth cup of coffee, his phone chimes with a text from Bev.

Did you get plenty of rest, Sleeping Beauty? We've got fresh corpses.

Followed quickly by a second text.

Jack is flipping his shit as usual.

Will pinches the bridge of his nose with two fingers and huffs out a breath. There isn't much to complain about at the moment, he's freshly showered and near lethally caffeinated, but he's already not looking forward to Jack bellowing first thing on a Tuesday morning.

One hand resting possessively on his souvenir mug, Will uses the other to tap out an enthusiastic reply.

Yay. Be there in 15.

Will finishes getting ready quickly, throwing on his clothes as he makes his way towards the door. On his way out, he grabs his wallet and keys from the kitchen, pours the rest of the coffee into a thermos, and as an afterthought, grabs one forgotten slice of toast from where it peeks out of the toaster and holds it between his teeth as he walks out the front door. There's nothing on it, but carbs are carbs and maybe he can convince Bev to pick them up something for lunch while he's swimming around in the mind of a killer.

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As he walks into work on this fine Tuesday morning, Will's universe is damn near peaceful. For all of two minutes.

"There you are!" Bev shouts from behind Will, startling him enough to make him choke on a mouthful of coffee. She claps him on the back twice and shoves a folder into his empty hand. "We've got some dead ones."

"What's this?"

"Two bodies found late last night, husband and wife. Burnt to a crisp."

Will sits down at his desk and opens the file. Staring back at him from the top of the small stack inside is a picture of two burnt corpses laid side by side. "Hello, Mr. and Mrs. Burnt Toast."

Bev leans against the desk and folds her arms over her chest. From her tight posture and the suspicious look on her face, Will can already tell what she's going to say before she says it. "How much sleep did you get last night?"

"Enough to function," Will says, dismissive of her good-natured worrying as usual. He flips open the folder in front of him and grabs the handful of crime scene photos inside.

"I don't believe you. Anyway, my gut feeling is that someone murdered them and then lit the house on fire to destroy the evidence."

"I'm assuming we didn't know they were murdered until Zeller and Price got their hands on them," Will says, flipping through photos of the bodies and the burnt remains of what once was their Stepford-esque upper middle class house.

"Right. Jack is putting this one on us to figure out."

“Do we have any experts available to consult?”

“Lead arson investigator at our friendly neighborhood fire station. But word is his wife just had a baby.”

“And that stops him from consulting on this case because…”

“Because he’s celebrating the birth of his new baby in Las Vegas without his wife.”

“Of course. Who else do we have?”

“At that same fire station, the lieutenant might be helpful. His name is Hannibal Lecter and he’s worked with us before on cases involving fire that weren’t explicitly considered arson. I called ahead and he’s expecting us.”

“Let’s go talk to him,” Will pauses to grab his coat from where it usually lays on the back of his chair and then realizes with a sigh that he never got the chance to take it off. “How long have you been here?”

Bev crosses her arms and shrugs. “Since 3 this the morning, give or take.”

“So he called you in and not me?” Will asks, trying not to sound offended.

“Jack said something about you being useless to him on zero sleep,” Bev replies with a grin, ducking to avoid the pen that Will throws at her. “Then he amended that and said you’re always useful, but he doesn’t need your excessive sass when you’re running on two to three hours of shut-eye.”

Will thinks if he frowns any deeper it might become permanent. “I always have exactly the right amount of sass.”

“That you do. I’ll drive.”

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In the car, Will absorbs as many of the details as he can and lets the evidence paint the picture. The fire station is as close as Beverly made it sound, only a few blocks from the police department, but they spend most of the trip sitting in bumper to bumper morning traffic and that gives Will time to get up to speed.

A married couple in their thirties, Derek and Tamara Murphy, murdered and then burned beyond recognition. No children and no immediate family. Neighbors interviewed on the scene reported waking up to the Murphys’ house engulfed in flames, but none were awake before the fire started. Home security reported that the fire alarm was never set off, because it had been disconnected due to three months of non-payment. Apparently that ‘Protected By’ sign on the perfectly manicured lawn was just for show.

“Are we sure this guy is any good at his job?” Will asks as Bev pulls the car up to Fire Station 13. The bay doors are open and Will sees a few firefighters inside.

“Remember that case a year ago where all those warehouses burned down that had been under surveillance for gang-related activity?”

“Yeah, Ramirez was ripping his hair out trying to figure out if it was the gang destroying evidence or if it was the rival gang destroying product and how the hell they were doing it. They could never catch anybody at the scene.”

“Hannibal Lecter helped him figure out that the fires were being started remotely, which was the lead he needed,” Bev says, turning her head to give Will a severe look. “Be nice.”

“What makes you think I won’t be nice?” Will doesn’t wait for her answer. He gets out of the car and shuts the door behind him. He can feel her eyes on him, like she wants to say something else, but she stays quiet as they walk up to the bay doors.

Two firefighters notice them and Will flashes his badge at the same time Bev does. “Baltimore PD. I’m Detective Graham and this is Detective Katz. We’re here to speak to Mr. Lecter.”

One of the firefighters, tall and well-built with dirty blonde hair, grins at Will and offers him his hand. “You’ve found him. What can I do for you, Detective Graham?”

He has a European accent that Will can’t quite place and he looks younger than Will imagined he would. Will takes his hand and finds a firm, but not too-tight grip. “We have crime scene photos that we’d like you to take a look at.”

Mr. Lecter releases Will’s hand and shakes Bev’s next. “Anything for the man and lady in blue.”

The firefighter standing next to him gives him a sidelong glance and laughs.

“Mischa, enough.”

Will looks past the men in front of them towards the door of an office, where another tall man with dirty blonde hair stands. It’s like looking at two versions of the same person, with the uncanny resemblance and unique accent, except one is older and has the sharpest cheekbones that Will has ever seen.

“They asked for Mr. Lecter, they did not specify whether they wanted Mischa or Hannibal,” Mischa says innocently, holding his hands up in mock surrender. “It was nice meeting you two.”

Mischa, as Will now knows him, walks off with the other firefighter, laughing and talking animatedly about something. Bev leads the way towards Hannibal's office, with Will following behind.

"I apologize for my brother's rudeness," Hannibal says, holding the door for both detectives and then closing it behind them. "He knew I was expecting you."

"Lieutenant--" Will starts.

"Please, call me Hannibal."

Will doesn't think he's going to get used to the way Hannibal smiles with just his eyes. He takes a seat at the desk and Bev takes the one to his left. "Hannibal. A married couple was found dead in their home late last night."

"We're hoping you can tell us… well, anything," Bev says as she lays out the crime scene photos on Hannibal's desk. "Most of our evidence went up in flames and then got doused with gallons and gallons of water."

Hannibal stands behind the desk and looks at the spread of photos, long fingers ghosting over a few. Will watches and takes note of where his attention lingers, wondering what it is that's going through Hannibal's head. The man hasn't said enough for Will to get a read on him, but for some reason he *wants* to.

"What was the square footage of the house?" Hannibal asks.

"Approximately 2,700 square feet," Bev answers. "Single story."

"Was the entire house engulfed in flame when firefighters arrived?"

“Yes. Rescue crews didn’t even try to enter the building. Our officers first on the scene said that it was an inferno.”

“What did your forensic team find?”

“Deep gashes in both of the victims’ necks.” Will accidently meets Hannibal’s expectant gaze and finds himself uncomfortable for it. Eye contact has never been one of his strong points. “Our lab guys found traces of accelerant in the debris and pour patterns that suggest it was the catalyst for multiple points of ignition.”

“When a fire goes into flashover, which is common in a home with an abundance of flammable material that gets hot very quickly, it can leave burn patterns that are often mistaken for indicators of a fire’s origin,” Hannibal says, taking a seat in his chair behind the desk. “This makes it difficult to determine where a fire started and even more difficult to determine if there were multiple points of origin.”

“Well, let’s say hypothetically there was only one point of origin.”

“Hypothetically.”

Now Will’s starting to get irritated. But he has to admit that Hannibal’s insight is helping him piece everything together.

“Our killer wasn’t in a hurry. The alarm system was disconnected due to non-payment, if he knew that then he knew he’d have plenty of time for the fire to destroy the evidence. He poured an accelerant but there was only one point of origin.”

The strangest expression settles on Hannibal’s features, like he’s *proud* of Will’s assessment, and for some unknown reason the back of Will’s neck feels considerably warmer.

“Man, watching you two go is exhilarating,” Bev says, crossing her legs and half-hiding her smile behind her hand. “So we’re looking for someone who was close enough to our vics to

know that they couldn't pay their bills and would have reason to want them dead?"

"It's a good place to start," Hannibal nods and starts collecting the photos into a neat stack. "In any case, there may be insurance money involved."

"There are no next of kin, so possibly a co-worker or a friend," Will says, mostly to himself. "Our killer didn't bother to make it look like an accident, so he's not afraid of being caught. The connection to him will be weak and difficult to find."

Will looks up and finds Hannibal's eyes on him again. They're the most unusual shade of brown rimmed in maroon, and he finds himself studying them for longer than he means to. He can practically hear exactly what Bev would think of that: *Wow, Graham. You made eye contact with another human being. I'm proud of you.*

"I think we've got a good lead to go on." Bev stands up and reaches over the desk to shake Hannibal's hand. Will expects him to offer her the photos, but he doesn't. "Thanks for seeing us. Would it be alright if we reach out to you in case we need your expertise again?"

"I'm always happy to be of assistance to the Baltimore Police Department," Hannibal says with a smile, standing up and holding out his hand towards Will.

Will hesitates for a breath and then grabs it, shaking it once to be polite and then pulling back like he's been burned. Whatever this feeling is, he wants to get as far away from it as possible, as fast as he can. To expedite the process, he grabs the stack of crime scene photos from Hannibal's other hand and starts for the door.

Bev pokes him hard in the side and Will looks at her with a frown. She raises her eyebrows, and Will knows immediately what that look means.

"Thank you for your help, Lieutenant," Will says with a slight turn and nod of his head.

"My pleasure, Detective Graham."

On their way out, once they're out of earshot of Hannibal or anyone else, Bev jabs him hard again.

"Ow! What did I do to deserve that?" Will asks incredulously, rubbing at his abused ribs.

"Sometimes you need to be poked for being oblivious," Bev replies as they climb into the car. "That man was looking at you like a starving man looks at a five course meal."

"I don't think he's that interesting," Will grumbles, watching the fire station as they pull out of the parking space. To his disappointment (*but why disappointment?)* , he can't see anyone in the bay. He doesn't think Bev is right on this one. Hannibal Lecter seemed like he was only interested in correcting him and patronizing Will when he drew an accurate conclusion. Drawing conclusions is what Will does for a damn living.

"Yeah, alright. Don't listen to Bev, Bev is never right about anything. Except she was right about that guy who became a regular at the bar by work just to get your number--"

"Yeah yeah yeah, let's get back to the station."

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Will holds out the styrofoam cup of coffee for Hannibal to take. He's already wired on caffeine, he has to be in order to function, but he thought it would be seem strange if he only brought coffee for Hannibal.

"I made yours the way that I take it. You seem like you could go both ways."

Hannibal takes the offered coffee cup from Will's hand and raises an eyebrow.

Will immediately realizes what he said and feels heat spread like wildfire across his cheeks. "I mean… you seem like a guy who is just as likely to enjoy black coffee or a Venti Caramel Macchiato with nonfat milk and two shots of espresso."

Chapter Notes

Unbeta'd! Poke me on Tumblr if you see any big mistakes and I'll be eternally grateful.

Will isn't sure why he's sitting outside of Fire Station 13 two short days after their first meeting with Hannibal Lecter. But that's not actually true. He's sitting in an unmarked SUV first thing in the morning with two styrofoam coffee cups and a sinking feeling in his stomach because he has more questions for Hannibal and Bev made a last minute excuse about urgently needing to contact a witness.

As he's sitting there for who knows how long, he sees Hannibal and Mischa emerge from the other side of one of the fire trucks. They stand there for a minute while Hannibal points out several things. Mischa nods a few times and jogs off, leaving his brother standing there alone.

Will takes the opportunity, getting out of the SUV with a cup of coffee in each hand and awkwardly closes the door with his hip.

As Will approaches, Hannibal turns his head and catches sight of him. The look on his face shifts from thoughtful to something very near appraising. He would be lying if he said that he

hadn't thought about what Bev said after they consulted with Hannibal the first time. He still doesn't think she's right, but regardless of that, he would really appreciate Hannibal's expertise and fresh perspective right about now.

Hannibal acknowledges him with a nod. "Detective Graham, it's a pleasure to see you again."

"Ah, please call me Will."

"Will." Hannibal tries out the name like he's tasting it. "What can I do for you?"

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Hannibal smiles and takes a sip of coffee. "I gather you've taken a few Starbucks orders in your time."

"Bev yells at me if I forget to ask for nonfat milk," Will says, finding that it's far too easy to reciprocate Hannibal's smile. "She can tell if I forget because it 'tastes too good'."

"I appreciate the thought, Will," Hannibal replies, holding out his hand towards the office. "I assume you're here because you have questions for me about your case."

Will nods and walks towards the office. As they reach the door, he feels a light touch in the middle of his back that sends a jolt up and down his spine. It's gone just as quickly, but Will feels the ghost of it even as he sits down.

"I'm wondering if I can pick your brain. There's a few things about this case that aren't adding up."

"My brain is yours to pick as you please, Will," Hannibal says, sipping at his coffee. "Tell me what you have so far."

"Our victims were childless and had no close living relatives. The husband worked as a welder and the wife was a consultant. Every co-worker we interviewed had nothing but glowing things to say about the both of them and somehow, unless some of them are incredibly good liars, they were all sincere.

"I've been to the crime scene to look for anything the initial team might have missed and as you can imagine, every bit of usable evidence is destroyed."

"I'm sure you investigated whether this married couple had life insurance and who the beneficiaries are," Hannibal says.

Will lifts his eyes from the spot he'd been staring at on the desk and watches as Hannibal pulls a coaster out of his desk drawer to set the coffee cup on. It tells him something about the man that he didn't know before, that he uses a coaster even for styrofoam cups that wouldn't harm the wood.

"Each had a half million dollar life insurance policy and they were the sole beneficiaries for each other." Will takes off his glasses and rubs at his eyes, feeling a headache starting to build behind them. He's gotten even less sleep than usual these past two days. When he closes his eyes and manages to doze off, he feels flames licking at his skin and blood bubbling up from a twitching mouth-like wound in his throat.

“Do you have trouble sleeping, Will?”

It’s not the first time he’s heard it. Far from it, honestly, but this is the first time in a while that he can say it really bothers him. He’d hoped that it wouldn’t be so noticeable to Hannibal. What makes it worse is that Hannibal looks legitimately concerned, like he actually cares about the answer.

“I don’t really get a lot of sleep when there’s an active investigation,” Will replies dismissively, putting his glasses back on. “Right now all we have is that they were behind on their bills and everyone had a stellar opinion of them. They kept to themselves otherwise.”

“Have you considered the possibility of a fledgling serial arsonist?” Hannibal asks.

“That depends,” Will replies, folding his hands in his lap and tilting his head as he considers Hannibal’s words. “You know more about the effects of fire on the human body than I do. Could the skin on our vics split like that while they were burning? Enough to look like knife wounds?”

“Entirely possible. During the first few minutes the epidermis burns and peels away, then the dermis splits apart. It can certainly look like knife wounds.”

“Price said something about that when he gave the initial report - that it was hard to determine the nature of the open wounds on their necks.” Will rubs at the back of his neck and sighs. “Anyway, they were found face up. Generally if you’re trying to escape a fire you’re crawling on your hands and knees, then pass out from smoke inhalation and end up laying face down.”

Hannibal doesn’t say anything, just drinks from his coffee cup. Will gets the impression that the man is waiting for him to continue.

And really, there’s never been a worse time for Will’s mind to make a jump. He squeezes his eyes shut and the pendulum swings heavy behind his eyelids.

Will opens his eyes again and he's in bed. Not his bed. The room is dark. He feels as though he was awoken violently, and as his senses return to him, he begins to cough, thick smoke choking him and filling what feels like all the space in his lungs where oxygen should be.

He jolts upright in bed and coughs into his hand, shaking his wife with the other. "Sweetheart, wake up! Wake up, we gotta go!"

Next to him, his wife wakes with a start, and she coughs and coughs as they scramble out of bed. His first thought is to go for the window, and he does, unlatching it and pulling up. When it refuses to bed, he strains harder in between coughing fits, panic starting to set in, making his fingers feel numb and uncoordinated.

He throws his shoulder twice into the glass and it rattles, but doesn't give way. He gives up on the window and turns around to look for his wife.

"Tamara? Tamara!"

The bedroom door is open and Tamara is gone. Will runs out of the room, shielding his face from fire licking up towards him in the hallway. The smoke is thick and cloying, making it hard to see, and the heat is indescribable. Their home, their life, everything they own -- all these things are burning around him and he just has to find his wife. *He has to find her*.

"H-help, the door," Tamara coughs violently, on her knees in the middle of the inferno that is their living room. Their front door is blocked by a wall of fire.

Will rushes to her side, trying to pick her up and pull her to safety. Her body, petite as it is, goes slack in his arms and his vision starts to blur. She slips through his grasp like she was never there at all, falls to the floor unconscious, and he follows, blacking out as he hits the ground next to her, rolling onto his back with his arm laying across hers.

"Will. Will?"

Will opens his eyes and finds he's not actually a burnt corpse on the floor in the living room of the Murphys' house. He's in Hannibal Lecter's office, sitting in one of his surprisingly comfortable chairs, and his heart is jackhammering like it's trying to vacate his chest.

It's not often that he visits the mind of a victim. It feels… wrong.

"Where did you go, Will?" Hannibal asks with a concerned look. Sometime during Will's jump, Hannibal must have gotten up from his chair and tried to snap him out of it. Hannibal's hand rests lightly on Will's shoulder, the warmth of his palm bleeding through the fabric of his shirt.

"I'm sorry. Got lost in thought, I guess," Will replies, trying to keep the panic from creeping into his voice. "What time is it?"

Hannibal's hand slips from Will's shoulder. He checks his watch and says, "Just after 9."

"I need to get back to the station. Thank you for your help, Hannibal."

Will doesn't give Hannibal the chance to say anything else, getting up quickly from his chair and hoping to make a fast exit. He pushes the handle down and the door doesn't budge.

"I apologize, you'll have to lift up on it. It's been broken for a week," Hannibal says behind him.

Will lifts up on the handle and makes his great escape, ignoring his surroundings until he's in the safety of the SUV.

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"Hannibal, your puppy detective has been sitting in the parking lot for the past five minutes looking like he saw a ghost," Mischa says as he enters Hannibal's office a short time after

Will walked out. “What did you do to him?”

“Nothing.” It’s the truth, Hannibal thinks. Whatever caused Will to panic seemed internalized. One moment they’d been talking about the case and the next Will had been lost to whatever he was seeing behind his eyelids. It almost looked like he was dreaming.

“I don’t believe you. Looks like he left his coffee here too.” Mischa points out the cup sitting sans coaster on Hannibal’s desk, directly in front of where Will sat. When Will went into himself, Hannibal grabbed the coffee cup and sat it on the desk so he wouldn’t drop it. He hadn’t realized at the time that he’d set it there without a coaster. “You must have really spooked him.”

“I did no such thing,” Hannibal says.

“Were you able to help him with the case at least?” Mischa asks, leaning in the doorway and wiggling his eyebrows.

Hannibal wonders that very thing. Normally when law enforcement sought him out in the past, he’s felt obligated to politely assist them but he’s never particularly wanted to. Until now. He *wants* to help Will Graham solve his case, if only to see a little weight fall from his shoulders. And so he can ask to make dinner for him afterwards.

“I believe so.”

“Is that why you’re smiling like a fool?” Mischa asks.

“For the first time in a long while, I see the possibility of friendship.”

Mischa raises an eyebrow. “Well? Are you going to sit there all day looking smitten or are you going to admit it out loud?”

“The possibility of a friendship with Will Graham,” Hannibal says.

“Wow, you’ve got it bad.”

“Don’t you have equipment to clean and inspect?”

“Matt lost a bet, so he’s doing it for me.”

The look on Hannibal’s face must give away exactly how he feels about that, because Mischa purses his lips and shrugs his shoulders. “Alright, alright, I’ll go help him. You know I only tease you because you work too hard. You deserve to have some fun, big brother.”

Hannibal sees the true concern there, camouflaged almost perfectly by Mischa’s nonchalant demeanor. It’s true, that for years now Hannibal hasn’t taken the time to do much for himself. He works upwards of 50 to 60 hours a week, sometimes more, leaving him with limited free time to pursue cooking and art. The former is only social when Hannibal entertains a guest and the latter is a solitary activity.

“Mischa.”

“I’m going, I’m going.” Mischa turns to leave the office and shuts the door behind him, but not before having the last word. “Get his number next time!”

Hannibal leans back in his chair and takes a moment to gather himself. He doesn’t know that any human being has ever unsettled him the way Will Graham has, and they’ve only spent the better part of twenty minutes together. He shudders to think what would become of him if Will had all the time in the world.

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Late Thursday night, a call comes in that another home just two miles from the police station was burnt down with a family of five inside. Bev breaks the news to him and it's all Will can do to not to put his fist into a wall. He had a sinking feeling that if they didn't come up with another lead soon, then they'd see it happen again.

"You might want to take a second to breathe," Bev says. "Fire's just been put out. We have a few minutes before fire crews say it's safe for our first responders to enter the house."

"Were there any survivors?" Will asks. A family of five generally means two parents and three kids that could have all been murdered.

"I don't know for sure yet."

Will knows just by looking at Bev that she's almost certain there are none and she's trying to spare him. They'll know once they get to the crime scene, so he lets it go. He needs to be in the right headspace to look for evidence to catch whoever their arsonist is.

"We're now assuming this is a serial arsonist," Will says, and Bev nods solemnly. "We need to find something. I'm not waiting for another family to burn alive."

"Get your coat."

Will nods as he pulls on his jacket and follows his partner. They climb into their usual unmarked SUV and Beverly screeches out of the parking lot.

On the drive there, Will dozes off with his head against the window, despite the adrenaline and caffeine raging through his system. He's definitely building a tolerance, even to the jet fuel that Jack stocks the break room with.

"Graham, wake up!"

Beverly jabs him violently in his side, and Will jerks upright in his seat and wipes the back of his hand against the corner of his mouth to check for drool. It isn't often that he falls asleep like that after mainlining caffeine. Then again, he's gotten all of 8 hours of sleep over the past few days.

"Have you tried going to the doctor and asking for sleeping pills?" Beverly asks.

"No. I'm worried they'll make me pull a Rip Van Winkle."

"Therapy?"

"I really don't enjoy being psychoanalyzed."

"Yoga? Acupuncture? Zen Buddhist mantras? Binge drinking?"

"Bev, I'm perfectly fine besides the fact that I don't sleep," Will explains for what feels like the hundredth time. "I like my job, I like my apartment, I like my partner," that earns him a grin from said partner, "I even like my party trick sometimes. If I promise to look into solutions for my sleeplessness, would that make you worry even a fraction less?"

"Listen, as long as you tell me you're trying something, I'll back off. But we've been partners for two years and I like your grouchy ass, so it's hard for me not to worry." Beverly pulls up to the curb a few hundred feet from the police line, where a group of neighbors are milling around the outside of the caution tape.

Beverly's concern for his well-being is genuine, like everything else about her, and it makes Will smile despite his shitty mood.

"Duly noted," Will says as he gets out of the car, closing the door behind him.

They flash their badges to the officers watching the line, walk around the two fire trucks blocking the majority of the street, and Will gets his first real view of the house. It's a pleasant little one-story with a buttercup yellow exterior and a porch with white columns and banisters. The front windows are blown out, where the flames heated the glass until it shattered and then licked up the front side of the house before the firefighters were able to put it out.

"Are we clear to enter yet?" Bev asks one of the officers standing out front.

"You'll have to ask the guy inside with the funny accent," the officer says, jerking his chin towards the door. "They just got the thing put out."

He doesn't have a funny accent , Will thinks sourly, followed by, *Shit, Hannibal's here?*

As if summoned, Hannibal steps out of the house and onto the porch. He looks statuesque, wearing full yellow and black firefighting attire and carrying an axe, face darkened by smoke and ash and sweat. At first, he doesn't notice Will standing there watching him. Another firefighter coming out behind him catches his attention.

"Roll up the hose, Randall. Get Mischa to help you. We're finished here."

"I'm on it."

Randall runs down the steps from the porch and passes by Will and Bev.

Hannibal's gaze lifts and meets Will's, his expression softening almost imperceptibly. "Detective Graham, Detective Katz."

"Lieutenant," Bev greets him. "Are we cleared to go in?"

“You are,” Hannibal says with a nod. “We did our best not to disturb anything more than necessary.”

The bodies. You did your best not to disturb the bodies.

Bev pats Will’s shoulder and heads up the steps to go into the house. Will stuffs his hands into the pockets of his jacket and follows.

“Would you want to throw on a pair of gloves and give us your opinion, Lieutenant?” Will asks.

“Give me a few minutes to remove my gear and I would be happy to.”

“Maybe get rid of the axe, too.”

Will can hardly believe that the words left his mouth, but the warm smile that Hannibal gifts him with makes them worth it. There’s an uncertain moment where they both linger at the threshold of the home, and then Hannibal brushes past him and makes his way towards the street.

Will enters the living room and Bev gives him a wry look as she pulls on a pair of gloves. “We don’t get to touch anything until they get in here with cameras. I don’t know what I’m going to do with myself.”

“Where are the bodies?”

“Not here, as far as I can tell.” Bev does a slow turn as she surveys the living room.

“Are Zeller and Price on the way?” Will asks.

“Better than that!” chimes in a cheerful voice from behind them. “We’re already here.”

Zeller follows through the door behind Price with a forensic kit and nods at Will and Bev. He looks around the room and sighs. “I don’t think I’m alone in saying that I hoped the last one would be the only one.”

“We never get that lucky,” Price says, pulling on a pair of gloves. One last firefighter comes from the kitchen, Will recognizes him as the one who’d been standing with Mischa the day they first went to the station, and he walks past them and out the door without a word. Price watches him go with an appraising tilt of his head. “You know, I would usually bitch about firefighters stomping around my crime scene, but these ones are cute.”

As more police file in to start the initial sweep of the crime scene, Will walks towards the hallway to find the dead bodies that the firefighters reported. He finds two adult-sized corpses lying side by side on the bed in the master bedroom. They most likely died in their sleep. With the parents accounted for, he leaves the master and walks down the hallway.

Bev is already standing outside of the bedroom at the end of the hallway and her expression is grim.

“Looks like three kids,” she says as Will approaches. “There’s no chance any of them could have survived this.”

Despite the sick feeling in his stomach, Will forces himself to look.

On the floor is their tallest child, maybe no more than seven or eight judging from the height, face down on his or her stomach. Will can see immediately that this was the oldest sibling, trying to get the door open to rescue the younger ones. Judging from the marks on the door, the flames were already licking at it from the outside. Just a little farther in are two smaller bodies lying on their sides.

“The door handle would’ve been too hot to turn,” Will says. “And I can see the locks on the windows from here.”

“You think you can do your thing?” Bev asks.

“I seem to not have a choice in the matter lately,” Will laments quietly. “I made a jump when I was with Hannibal this morning.”

Bev’s eyes widen a little in surprise. “Well? Don’t hold out on me.”

“You know everything I know. I didn’t slip into the killer’s perspective this time,” he pauses when a rookie looks down the hallway at them and then quickly turns around, “I was Derek Murphy.”

“So you saw how they died.”

“I didn’t just see it. I experienced it.”

“That sounds awful.”

“You have no idea.”

The same rookie pops his head around the corner and Will puts on his best unapproachable face, but it fades when he sees Hannibal following behind. Instead of full firefighting gear, he’s wearing just a tight, navy blue t-shirt and dark gray firehose pants. He looks remarkably put together for someone who just helped put out a raging house fire. Will meets him halfway.

“I don’t think this killer has specific intent to kill these people. I think this is arson with the consequence of murder. We gave him too much credit.”

“Whoever your arsonist is, perhaps he’s choosing his targets at random,” Hannibal says, pressing his lips together into a thin line. “Setting fires just for the sake of watching them burn.”

It’s the most common reason and also the hardest to find evidence for. Without an eye witness to give them a lead, it could be a long time before their arsonist makes a mistake and leaves behind evidence. That means more chances for whoever this is to injure or kill families. Will isn’t alright with that, not even a little bit.

Will takes a deep breath to steady himself. Hannibal watches him with a neutral expression, and some part of Will has a bizarre thought that the man’s presence is calming him.

“Can you tell me where the fire started?”

“Of course, Will. Allow me some time to observe the state of things and I’ll have an answer for you.”

Satisfied, Will gets to work on piecing together the evidence.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

“Will!” Mischa greets him as he walks up to the open bay door. “I imagine you’re here to see my brother.”

“Is he here?” Will asks, suddenly aware of the fact that he didn’t even consider that Hannibal might have the day off.

“He called in sick, which is unheard of. Said something about the Baltimore PD working him like a dog. Right, Matt?” Mischa looks to the firefighter next to him for confirmation.

“That’s what I heard,” Matt agrees, flashing Will a toothy smile that seems overly friendly and almost predatory.

Chapter Notes

Happy New Year, Fannibals! I hope everyone has a way better year, since 2017 was a dumpster fire. 8D

And thank you everyone for the wonderful comments. They're like fuel, helping me power through this thing! Fannibals are by far the kindest people I've ever created for and I'm constantly in awe of that. <3

Unbeta'd! If you see any mistakes, feel free to poke me on Tumblr and let me know.

By some stroke of luck, one neighbor saw a blue truck (possibly a Chevy) driving around the neighborhood a few hours before the fire. She caught the letters and one number of the license plate, YD2, but couldn’t see the rest. The truck passed by her house five times in the space of an hour and she didn’t see it again before she went to bed. It’s the kind of break that breathes life into an investigation that’s cold, but Jack refuses to let Will and Bev work the case any longer without at least six hours of sleep.

“At least six hours, no less. I need you both rested and ready to solve this,” Jack says, giving the both of them a severe look.

“You want us to walk away when we’ve got our first real break?”

Will always has a habit of pushing Jack’s buttons, it’s one of the things he enjoys most about their working relationship, but he knows from the fury he sees on the man’s face that he’s pushed the wrong one this time.

“Go home! Now!"

Will makes it home in the very early morning and falls into his bed, dead to the world for four blissful hours where he doesn’t have a nightmare to speak of. He wakes up drenched in sweat, a usual occurrence that doesn’t phase him as much as it used to, and goes through his morning routine.

In the shower he jerks himself off with the image of dark eyes rimmed in red in the back of his mind, and curses when he loses track of time and the water abruptly turns cold.

Shower incident aside, everything else goes smoothly. As he’s pouring coffee into a thermos, he pauses and considers stopping by the fire station to thank Hannibal for his help. He had no reason to stay as long as he did -- he was probably just as exhausted as anyone else there. But he did stay and he offered commentary when it was relevant, stayed out of the way when necessary, and went out of his way to say goodnight to Will before he left.

Will actually liked having him around, which is saying something, because he really dislikes interacting with people and as far as he knows, Hannibal Lecter is a person.

Before he can overthink it, he grabs another thermos from the cupboard and fills it. It’s in nicer shape than the one he uses every day, either a gift from someone or something he bought and forgot he owned. He heads out the door with it in hand and hops into his car, pulling out onto the street feeling strangely excited.

The drive to the fire station is uneventful besides Will managing to spill a few drops of coffee on his pants. He parks the car and grabs the thermos for Hannibal. As he’s getting out, he

spots Mischa in the bay talking to the same firefighter from the first time they met.

"Will!" Mischa greets him as he walks up to the open bay door. "I imagine you're here to see my brother."

"Is he here?" Will asks, suddenly aware of the fact that he didn't even consider that Hannibal might have the day off.

"He called in sick, which is unheard of. Said something about the Baltimore PD working him like a dog. Right, Matt?" Mischa looks to the firefighter next to him for confirmation.

"That's what I heard," Matt agrees, flashing Will a toothy smile that seems overly friendly and almost predatory.

"I see," Will says with a upward twitch of his mouth that he hopes is enough to make him not seem like an asshole. He's not sure what this heavy feeling in his chest is (*disappointment?*), but he knows he wants nothing to do with it. To distract himself from it, he puts his lower lip between his teeth and bites down, then releases it. "Thanks for letting me know."

Will turns to leave and Mischa says behind him, "Do you want Hannibal's cell number? It would make it easier for you to coordinate with him."

Generally Will would frown on getting a phone number through someone other than its owner. He's made it clear in the past to anyone who has his number that it's not something that's given lightly. But maybe he'll just ask Hannibal later and delete it if the man seems bothered by the fact that Will has it.

He blatantly ignores the fact that his brain is already assuming he'll see Hannibal later.

"Sure."

Mischa's face lights up and he holds out his hand. "Create a contact for him and I'll put the number in."

Will pulls out his phone, creates a contact for Hannibal Lecter, and hands the phone over to Mischa. Matt watches over Mischa's shoulder as he enters the number, the corners of his mouth twitching up into a ghost of a smile.

"There, done." Mischa offers the phone back to Will and grins. "It's probably better to call. I've tried to train him to check his phone regularly for texts, but he says it's a distraction."

Without bothering to look at his phone, Will takes it back and locks it. "Thank you, Mischa."

"You're welcome, Will. Don't be a stranger."

Will carries his phone and the thermos of coffee to the car. Once he's inside it, with a quick glance to make sure he can't see Mischa or Matt, he drops his forehead against the steering wheel and inhales deeply.

Being hyper-empathetic makes it simultaneously easy and difficult to connect with people. Will is too aware of their feelings and motivations, and when he really tries, he's sometimes able to guess what they're thinking. Nobody appreciates being read like an open book, not really. He's carefully built up defenses to prevent being overwhelmed by the world, with the consequence of coming off as unapproachable and rude.

Very few people have managed to penetrate those defenses enough to see the real Will Graham. Bev was the most recent and that was two years ago when they were assigned as partners. She refused to accept that Will was an antisocial asshole and essentially forced him out of his shell. He appreciates her for that. They're partners and friends, and he wouldn't change that for anything.

Now there's Hannibal and he's… Hannibal. Who's not here today and for some reason Will finds that very disappointing.

A knock on Wil's window makes him jump in his seat, and he turns his head to see Hannibal standing outside the car. Will turns on the car and rolls the window down.

"Hi," he says, a little dazed.

"Hello, Will." Hannibal smiles, lines forming at the corners of his eyes. "I see they've taken to hazing you now."

Will feels his face grow hot, a sudden warmth that spreads rapidly outward across his nose, cheeks, and ears. "I just came to say thank you for yesterday."

"It was no trouble, I promise."

"I'm still grateful. Fire science isn't my forte."

"I couldn't rightfully say no when you asked for my help," Hannibal says.

"Right, uh, I brought you coffee." Will grabs the thermos and offers it through the window, desperate to change the subject. "I still don't know how you like to take it."

Will wonders why everything that comes out of his mouth around Hannibal has to sound like an awkward innuendo.

Hannibal watches him with dark eyes and accepts the thermos. "Thank you, Will."

"You're welcome," Will says, feeling elated despite his embarrassment. "One of the neighbors gave us a solid lead."

"I'm glad. I hope you find the person responsible before they cause more harm."

Will feels like he's still waiting for some insincerity from Hannibal, for some flaw to poke through his perfect mask. At this rate, he feels like he could wait forever before the man gives anything away that he doesn't want Will to know.

It's exciting and new, not knowing too much about someone before they're ready to share it.

"I hope we do too." Will licks his lower lip briefly and remembers Mischa giving him Hannibal's phone number. He grabs his phone and unlocks it, then stares at Hannibal's contact information for a few long moments. "I should let you know that Mischa gave me your cell number. I'll delete it if you want."

"Keep it," Hannibal says. "I trust that you won't abuse it."

"Any particular reason why he changed your contact name to Count Lecter?" Will asks, looking up from the phone to Hannibal.

Hannibal looks surprised for a split second, but quickly covers it with a smile. "I'll tell you the next time I see you. Drive safe, Will. And if you can, forgive Mischa for being troublesome."

Will smiles back and tucks his phone into his jacket pocket. "I can. Thank you again."

Hannibal turns to walk back into the fire station. Will watches him go, still a little mystified at the entire exchange, then pulls out of the parking space and heads to work.

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As Will walks into the police station and heads for his desk, he sees Bev hovering near Miriam. Both women are talking and pointing at something on the computer. Hopeful that

this means they've got a suspect, Will walks over to join them.

Bev looks up as Will approaches them and grins. "Miriam found us a suspect."

"I've got a name and an address for you," Miriam says. "Francis Dolarhyde, convicted six years ago for arson and attempted murder. He pled insanity and thanks to an incredible lawyer and the testimony of his wife, Reba, he only spent two years rehabilitating in a criminal psychiatric facility. He was evaluated at that point and they determined he was ready to enter society again."

"Who did he attempt to murder?" Will asks.

"Reba, their son Benjamin, and himself. He had a psychotic episode and set the house on fire with all of them in it."

"He lives less than 3 miles from our latest crime scene and he owns a blue 2011 Chevy Silverado with a license plate that's a partial match," Bev says, crossing her arms over her chest. She looks far too awake and fired up considering they were just at a crime scene a little over six hours ago. "I say we pay Mr. Dolarhyde a visit."

"Let's go then."

Will follows Bev out to the car. Once they're buckled in, he contemplates talking to her about Hannibal and this strange thing forming between them, but ultimately decides against it.

"So, how's Hannibal?"

Apparently Bev decided for it.

"I'm sure he's doing fine."

“You would know. You saw him this morning.”

Will looks at her with complete disbelief. “How?”

“So you did see him this morning,” Bev says with a grin, pulling out of the parking space. “I guessed as much, but it’s nice to know that my powers of deduction are sharp as ever.”

Will frowns petulantly and looks out the window. He must be really out of it to let himself fall for that. “I brought him some coffee to thank him for helping us.”

“Did you make it yourself or buy it from somewhere?”

“Why does that matter?”

“Because it matters,” Bev sighs. “C’mon Graham, I know you’re not this oblivious. He’s not really my type, but the man is hot, foreign, and he practically has hearts in his eyes whenever he looks at you. I’m not the one with hyper-empathy and I got all that in the five minutes we talked to him.”

“Hearts in his eyes?” Will asks with a frown. He tries to remember the times he’s interacted with Hannibal, specifically what he could see in his eyes. It does him no good. He hardly ever made eye contact with the man, and when he did, that strange feeling in the pit of his stomach was so intense he had to look away. There’s a good reason he doesn’t make eye contact with people, and several excellent reasons that he doesn’t make eye contact with Hannibal Lecter.

“Yeah, so imagine an on off switch. When Hannibal was looking at me, the heart eyes switch was off. When he looked at you, he flipped that switch so hard that it broke.”

Will laughs so hard that he has to rub tears from his eyes. For the rest of the ride Bev takes pity on him and fulfills Will's request to talk about anything except Hannibal. They do a drive-by of Dolarhyde's house to see if there are any cars in the driveway, and as luck would have it, the blue Chevy is there. Will snaps a picture of it with his phone as they pass by.

Bev parks the car across the street and both detectives climb out. They walk up to the front door of Francis Dolarhyde's one-story home and Bev knocks, then steps back a little to wait.

A few long moments pass and Will hears the lock on the door click. A woman opens the door and asks, "May I help you?"

"Yes, ma'am, I'm Detective Katz and this is Detective Graham," Bev says, flashing her badge. Will notices that the woman's eyes don't follow the motion exactly, just follow the general direction of the sound, and he turns his head towards Bev.

She nods at him, apparently having noticed the same thing he did. If Will had to guess, he'd say that this is Francis's wife Reba, and she's undoubtedly blind.

"We're looking for Francis Dolarhyde. Is he home?"

"Is everything alright?" the woman asks.

"We're just hoping to ask him a few questions about his whereabouts last night," Bev says gently, always better at talking to people than Will could ever be. He's 'too abrasive' and 'kind of an asshole'. "A family's home was burned down and a witness saw a blue Chevy Silverado circling the neighborhood shortly before it happened."

"You think he had something to do with it?" Will can see the shadow of panic that passes over Reba's face and through her sightless eyes. It's there and then gone in an instant, easily missed if Will hadn't been watching every microexpression very carefully.

Will wonders how long she's been waiting for the other shoe to drop.

“Reba, it’s alright. Let them in.”

Reba smiles and nods, moving out of the way enough for the detectives to enter the house. Bev leads the way and Will follows behind. The living room is directly to their left as they enter, decorated modestly with dark furniture and centered around a flat screen TV hanging on the wall.

“Give me just a minute,” Francis says from the kitchen. “I don’t want to burn the bacon.”

Will and Bev share a quizzical look, but neither says anything. Reba shuts the door behind them and waves her hand towards the living room. “You can sit if you’d like.”

Bev takes the lead and walks over to the couch. Will lags behind a little, looking around at the family photos hanging on the wall. There are some of Reba and Francis when they were obviously younger, a couple of what Will assumes must be their son Benjamin, and a few of Reba and Benjamin. There are none of Benjamin and his father or the family as a whole.

Francis appears in the doorway to the kitchen clutching a mug of something steaming hot. It makes Will immediately long for coffee, which in turn makes his thoughts flicker unbidden to Hannibal. He wonders if the man will ever want to see him again, for he’s certainly realized by now that Will is a grouchy, morbid, antisocial insomniac that spends most of his time thinking about killers and their motivators.

“What can I do for you, detectives?” Francis asks, taking a seat in an armchair across from the couch.

“Where were you last night between 9 pm and 12 am, Mr. Dolarhyde?” Bev asks.

“In bed with my wife. We went to bed just before 9 o’clock and I watched TV until… 9:45, I believe.” Francis says, and Reba nods her head in agreement. “Before that we made dinner and watched a movie on the couch.”

“The reason I ask is because a blue Chevy truck was seen multiple times driving through the neighborhood of a home that burned down last night, just a few miles from here,” Bev frowns and crosses her legs, folding her hands on top of her thigh. “A family including three children died.”

“That’s awful. I assure you, we were both here all night. If our son Ben was here, he would say the same. He was in his room studying for a test when we went to bed,” Reba says, looking almost relieved.

This is generally how things go when the two of them are questioning a suspect. Bev does most of the talking and asking of questions, while Will listens and decides if the person they’re talking to might be lying or not, or if their story has any glaring inconsistencies. So far, Will can hear the hint of a speech impediment and he can see the mannerisms of a man who has spent every day of the last however many years taking happy pills to make him *normal* , but there is no blatant dishonesty.

“Where is Ben?” Will asks, finally taking a seat next to Bev on the couch.

“At school, of course. It’s the middle of the day.”

“Of course,” Bev says. “What do you two do for work?”

“Reba processes film and I work in construction,” Francis takes a long drink from his mug, then wipes at the corner of his mouth with his thumb. “I’m in between projects at the moment.”

“My job switched us a few months ago from five 8 hour days to four 10 hour days,” Reba adds, apparently guessing at the question that hangs in the air. “I have every Friday off.”

“Did anyone borrow your Silverado yesterday between 9 pm and 12 am?”

“Not that I know of,” Francis says. “Or rather, not unless they took it without me knowing.”

Something wavers in Francis’s voice, so subtle that Will wonders if he imagined it. He watches the man’s face for anything out of the ordinary, but his expression gives nothing away. Will can’t tell if that’s the medication or if he’s just that unreadable.

“If you do find out that someone might have had your truck last night, you’ll let us know?”

“Of course, Detective…”

“Detective Katz. My partner here is Detective Graham.”

“Well, our breakfast is getting cold,” Francis says, getting up from his chair. He looks between Will and Bev, offering each a small nod and a polite smile. “You know where to find us if you have any other questions.”

Bev’s lip twitches, a sign of her irritation at being dismissed. Will takes the lead and stands, motioning with a nod towards the door for Bev to follow. “We’ll be back if we have any further questions for you.”

“The door isn’t locked,” Reba says, implying that they can see themselves out. “Have a good day, detectives. I hope you find the person you’re looking for.”

When Will gets into the SUV, Bev looks at him expectantly.

“There’s definitely some family dysfunction, but who wouldn’t expect that given the circumstances?” Will buckles his seatbelt and continues. “Their son is in high school now, probably a junior or senior, judging from the football awards hanging on the wall. Francis takes medication for whatever they diagnosed him with at the psychiatric facility, and he has to take it with food. He probably popped the pills just before we arrived and needed to combat the side effects quickly, which is why he politely but hastily dismissed us.

“There are no pictures of Francis and Ben together, perhaps because Reba is blind and wouldn’t be able to take a very accurate photo. But there are no photos of the family together, which makes me believe that in reality, Francis and Ben have a difficult relationship and they don’t go places together that are picture-worthy. I noticed a pair of sneakers by the door with red dirt around the heel, which reminded me of the reddish dirt in the backyard at the Murphys’ house. The sneakers could be Francis’s or Ben’s, both are athletic, but they’re an older pair that have been well-cared for, so they belong to Francis.

“Both had a few little hints of different emotions that disappeared almost as fast as I could see them, so I’d say something about our visit either stirred up some bad memories or they’re hiding something. Probably both.”

Will takes a deep breath and exhales loudly. When he looks over at Bev, she’s gaping at him openly.

“What?”

“You’re fucking amazing, that’s what,” Bev laughs, pulling the car away from the curb.

“I’m really not. All we have is the truck with a license plate that partially matches a witness’s description and a pair of shoes that may or may not have dirt on them from the first crime scene.”

“I’ve gotten a search warrant for less.”

Will knows that she has. Bev has a way with words that he will never be able to replicate.

“Let’s head back and get that started then. In the meantime, we should have one of the unmarked patrol cars stake out the house and let us know if Dolarhyde makes a move.” Will absently pats his jacket pocket to make sure he has his phone. They’re both silent for the rest of the short ride, and as they pull up to the station and get out of the car, he looks at Bev and nonchalantly says, “I got Hannibal’s phone number this morning.”

“You did what?” Bev shouts, drawing the attention of several people in the parking lot.

Will refuses to tell Bev any more than that for now, no matter how much she begs, which turns out to be quite a bit.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Mischa reaches into his pocket and pulls out a piece of paper. He hands it through the car window to Will, who takes it. He unfolds the paper and reads: "Bâtard-Montrachet 2002." There's an address written below it.

"Go to Vintage Wines on 77th and McCleary. Ask for that wine by name and year. Tell them it's for Hannibal."

Will tucks the paper into his jacket pocket. "And then?"

"That is one of Hannibal's favorite wines, his home address, and it's his birthday." Mischa takes another sip of his coffee, looking pleased with himself.

Chapter Notes

Behold, another chapter! I figure this is about the schedule I'm going for, writing and editing during the week and then posting on Saturday/Sunday. These chapters are partially written, but there's still quite a bit of filler and plot I have to add to make them coherent. I wish I didn't work full time. :(I'd have so much time to write.

All foreign translations are done by Google, so I apologize to anyone who speaks the languages if any of it seems awful. There's not a ton of it, but the translations to English are at the bottom.

Again, this is unbeta'd, so please poke me on Tumblr if you see any mistakes and I'll be super grateful.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Will gets home that night, he feels tired and cold straight through to his bones. He spent the majority of the day searching for other possible suspects and revisiting what little evidence survived the fire, but their only suspect is still Francis Dolarhyde. Some part of him wants to believe that they have the right guy and the official search will be all they need to put a stop to their serial arsonist, but a small, nagging voice of doubt remains.

He strips out of his clothes on the way to the bedroom and pulls on the warmest flannel pajama pants that he owns, intent on burying himself under the covers until morning. The forecast promises snow throughout the weekend, despite this being the driest and warmest winter in 30 years.

"*Baltimore PD are stumped after two family homes burned down with the families still insi--*"

"No TV then," Will sighs, taking it as a sign and pressing the off button as fast as humanly possible. His hand reaches blindly to the nightstand where he usually sets his phone, intent on checking it for any missed calls and setting his alarm for the morning.

There are four texts from Bev, one of them letting him know that getting a warrant on the weekend is a pain in the ass and three asking him for details on how he got Hannibal's phone number. He sends her just one reply, sympathizing with her on getting the warrant, and closes out the text window.

He puts his lower lip between his teeth and presses the Contacts icon, scrolling down until he finds *Count Lecter*.

Mischa told him to call instead of text, but Will has only known Hannibal for the less than a week. His reason for doing either one is shaky at best, and he doesn't even know if this is actually Hannibal's number or not.

"God, what am I doing?" Will sighs as he taps out a text message and hits send.

Thank you again for your help. We might be on track to catching the person responsible.

Will tosses the phone to the other side of the bed and pulls the blankets over his legs. There's no chance that Hannibal is going to text back. Why would he? He already knows that Will is grateful for his help.

If he does respond at all, it'll probably be with awkward small talk (though Will has a hard time thinking about anything Hannibal does as awkward) and the conversation will be the last they ever have.

The screen on his phone lights up and it vibrates on the bedspread. Will looks at it with narrowed eyes and leans over to grab it, expecting it to be Bev.

You're very welcome.

Will releases the breath he's been holding and resigns himself to accept those words as a goodbye, but as he moves to set his phone on the bedside table, it vibrates in his hand.

I hope this doesn't mean that I'll stop hearing from you.

Will's heart stumbles in his chest, and it's with shaking fingers that he taps out a reply.

I do have your phone number.

Hannibal's reply follows in seconds.

You also know where I work.

Will smiles and sends a response.

Not tired of me darkening your doorstep yet?

The next reply makes Will's chest feel tight.

Never. The exact opposite, in fact. You can come by anytime you'd like.

Will swallows around the lump in his throat. He doesn't *do* this, this back and forth banter. He usually takes so long to text back that he forgets to even text back at all, and Bev never lets him live that down. What in the world is he doing?

Good to know.

It's a cop out, but the best he can come up with. He doesn't wait for Hannibal's response, just sets his alarm for the morning and pulls the covers up to his chin. Sleep doesn't come for over an hour, and eventually Will grabs his phone to look at the time. Only that.

Will you allow me to cook dinner for you sometime?

Hannibal said nothing else, leaving the question open to Will's response. Will sighs, sends a reply, and curls up under the blankets, phone lying on on the pillow beside him.

That depends.

--

Will shows up at the fire station that next morning with two thermoses of coffee and a *I don't know what the hell I'm doing here* attitude that he can't seem to shake. As he's debating whether to drive away and hope that nobody noticed him, he sees Mischa waving enthusiastically from the open bay.

With a deep and troubled sigh, Will watches as Mischa jogs over to the car. He rolls down the window and looks at the man expectantly.

"It's nice to see you, Will, but I'm sorry to say Hannibal isn't here today," Mischa says, sticking his hands in the pockets of his jacket. He laughs sheepishly at the skeptical look that

Will gives him. “He’s really not here, I swear. He’s got three days off.”

“Oh, I see. Do you want…” Will trails off and holds up the thermos.

“I thought you’d never ask,” Mischa says with a grin, taking the thermos from Will. He takes a loud sip and closes his eyes. “Ah, coffee. I’m so happy.”

“I’m glad,” Will says, feeling just a little foolish. He can’t use the excuse that he was just stopping by on the way to work, because Jack told him to take the day off while they wait for the warrant. Instead he has to admit that he was hoping to see Hannibal for no particular reason at all, and he went out of his way to do it.

“Would you like some free advice, Will?” Mischa asks.

“Ah… I guess? Sure.”

Mischa reaches into his pocket and pulls out a piece of paper. He hands it through the car window to Will, who takes it. He unfolds the paper and reads: “Bâtard-Montrachet 2002.” There’s an address written below it.

“Go to Vintage Wines on 77th and McCleary. Ask for that wine by name and year. Tell them it’s for Hannibal.”

Will tucks the paper into his jacket pocket. “And then?”

“That is one of Hannibal’s favorite wines, his home address, and it’s his birthday.” Mischa takes another sip of his coffee, looking pleased with himself.

“Why tell me all this, Mischa?” Will asks after a moment, his brows furrowed.

“Because I can tell that Hannibal likes you, and when we were much younger, he sacrificed everything to make sure I had a happy childhood and that I wanted for nothing,” Mischa explains with a solemn smile. “I’m afraid it’s a larger debt than I can ever fully repay, but I haven’t stopped trying.”

“Well… thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

Will nods and grips the steering wheel, about to put the car in reverse and drive away.

“Can I tell you a secret before you go?” Mischa asks, dark eyes wide, and Will can picture him as a young boy then, mischievous and easily bored, clinging to the older brother who adored him and had the patience of a saint.

“Of course.”

“My big brother is a very lonely person. He’s missing a… sweetheart. Lover. Significant other. Whatever you want to call it.”

Will’s cheeks warm as he considers exactly what Mischa is implying. “You’re telling me your brother is missing a bed warmer?”

“*Ne*, he’s never had a problem finding those. Have you seen him? He’s almost as good-looking as I am,” Mischa grins. “He’s missing a companion, I guess is the right word for it - someone to share every aspect of himself with and have them really see him as he is.”

It’s easy to see that Mischa is giving Will his blessing to get to know Hannibal, without actually saying as much, whether that’s as a friend or… more.

As the two men share a moment of thoughtful silence, the alarm at the fire station starts to blare. A woman announces over the loudspeaker, difficult to hear from the car, “Attention, active fire alarm. Truck 42 dispatch to 12501 Commonwealth Avenue.”

“Again?” Mischa shouts towards the bay, and a firefighter that’s already pulling on his gear (*Randall*, Will recalls) throws his hands up in response.

“Something wrong?” Will asks, unsure what to think of the man’s reaction.

“That address is an apartment building with this one elderly gentleman on the bottom floor,” Mischa grumbles, running a hand through his hair. “We’ve told him multiple times now that burning food and filling his apartment with smoke doesn’t mean he can summon us to open a window for him.”

“But you have to go, just in case there’s an actual fire,” Will says, undeniably glad to hear that it isn’t another home that’s a blazing inferno.

“You’re absolutely right, but thankfully not me. Truck 42 is the new recruits, Randall, and Matt.”

It takes about a minute for Truck 42 to pull out of the bay with its lights on and siren going. Will watches them pull out of the parking lot and onto the street, the wailing of the siren dying gradually as they get farther away.

“Good reaction time.”

“Hannibal would say it could be better,” Mischa laughs, holding up the thermos in salute. “Thank you again for the coffee. And don’t feel pressured to pick up the wine, Will. Only do it if you want to.”

Mischa nods at Will and turns to walk back towards the station. Will pulls out his phone to see if there’s any word about the warrant or Dolarhyde from Bev, but for now everything

seems quiet.

--

Will shows up at 5 Chandler Square just after 5 o'clock, and he stands at the door feeling like he's severely underdressed in his plaid shirt and gray jacket. Hannibal's townhome is undeniably impressive and Chandler Square is lined with similar homes, immaculate structures that must easily cost forty times Will's yearly salary. He doesn't know what he was expecting, but it wasn't anything quite so grand.

Hannibal answers the door in much nicer clothes than Will is wearing, a burnt orange shirt with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows, a dark striped vest, and paisley tie beneath. He looks pleasantly surprised, which releases the nervous tension that Will had been holding in his shoulders the entire ride here. Some part of him felt certain that Hannibal would find it rude if Will showed up unannounced, but the man standing in front of him seems inexplicably pleased.

"Will."

"I hope I'm not intruding. Mischa told me it was your birthday," Will says, holding up the bottle of wine in offering.

Hannibal smiles and steps aside, holding a hand towards the interior of the house. "Come in. I was just preparing dinner."

Will steps inside the door and feels the guiding hand on his back again, briefly but long enough that he shivers involuntarily for it. Hannibal takes the wine from him, then takes Will's jacket and hangs it by the door.

"This is by far the best year," Hannibal says appreciatively. "There's only one store in Baltimore that I've found that sells it."

“Mischa must have called ahead, because the lady working there said she was waiting for me and to say happy birthday to ‘that handsome Lithuanian fellow who brings me homemade canelé’,” Will says, trying not to gawk too much at Hannibal’s impeccably clean and impressive house as they walk into his equally clean and impressive kitchen. Something smells amazing. “She gave me that bottle for free. You must bring her *a lot* of homemade canelé.”

“I’m not above bribery when it suits me,” Hannibal says, a coy smile tugging at the corners of his mouth as he walks around the kitchen island and resumes whisking something in a bowl. “I apologize that you had to go so far out of your way.”

Will looks around the kitchen at the multiple ovens in use and the spread of covered dishes on the counter top. Hannibal looks so relaxed here, like Will is seeing him in his natural element for the first time.

“You’re making an awful lot of food for just yourself,” Will says.

Hannibal pauses for a moment, looking uncertain for the first time since Will arrived. “I’m afraid you’ve caught me on a night when I was planning to host guests. You’re welcome to stay, there will be more than enough food and I would love to have your company.”

Of course, Hannibal must be having friends over for dinner on his birthday, and Will just barged in uninvited. He doesn’t know what he’s doing, showing up at Hannibal’s house and expecting… what? To have dinner and to get to know each other? A lump rises in Will’s throat and he has to swallow several times before he can speak.

“Maybe next time,” Will says, looking anywhere but directly at Hannibal. His gaze falls on the man’s forearms, toned and bare below his rolled sleeves, and his stomach twists itself in knots at the frustrating realization that some part of Will wanted this to be a *date*.

“Are you sure you can’t stay?” Hannibal asks, glancing up from what he’s mixing. Their eyes meet briefly, entirely an accident on Will’s part, and Will’s smile is self-deprecating as he looks down.

“I don’t think I would be good company.”

“I disagree.”

Hannibal sounds so sincere that Will almost decides to stay. Almost.

“Before you go,” Hannibal says, apparently accepting the fact that Will has made up his mind, “you said that you might have found the person responsible. Tell me about him.”

“He’s a father and a husband that was convicted of arson years ago and spent some time in a criminal psychiatric facility,” Will explains, feeling only slightly more comfortable now that he’s in *his* element. “His vehicle matches the description of the one seen by a witness and we may have enough evidence for a search warrant. Everyone seems convinced that this is our arsonist.”

“What about you, Will? Are you convinced?”

“Not entirely. I’m skeptical.”

“That’s a good quality to have,” Hannibal says, smiling as he pours whatever he’d been mixing into a pan. “The guests will be here shortly, but I hope I can cook for you another time.”

“Happy birthday, Hannibal. Enjoy the wine,” Will says with a nod, turning to leave.

“Thank you, Will.”

Will doesn’t run, as much as he wants to. He walks at a perfectly calm pace out of Hannibal’s impeccably clean house and straight to his car, realizing only as he pulls away from the curb that he forgot his jacket inside and that it’s starting to snow. He doesn’t go back for it.

Will wonders if it's loneliness that has him feeling so magnetically drawn to someone he barely knows. In every brief relationship he's had, he's been too weird for that one, too morbid for this one, too empathetic for all of them. Hannibal hasn't seen those parts of him yet, and when he does, he'll surely want nothing to do with all of it.

Maybe he should resign himself to being alone and get a dog instead. Or seven.

--

After dinner, Hannibal sees his guests out, helping the ladies into their coats and telling them to drive safe since it had been snowing for almost two hours. He shuts the door as the last person leaves and only then does he notice the gray jacket hanging there, a reminder of the man who stood in his kitchen and who Hannibal would have begged to stay, if it wasn't so entirely out of character.

When he heard that knock on the door, he had assumed his guests had arrived early. He could barely contain his surprised delight at finding Will Graham on his doorstep instead, standing there with his cheeks and nose bitten red by cold, clutching a bottle of Bâtard-Montrachet and acting like there was a possibility his presence might be unwanted. Hannibal wondered then if Will had any idea how close he was to cancelling the dinner party he had planned, just to spend the evening together in whatever capacity Will would allow.

But no, Will isn't like any of the men or women Hannibal had courted in the past. Many of them had been intrigued by his lavish home and expensive taste, fell into his bed with the hope of ensnaring him, and the chase was always over before it truly started. With Will it feels exactly opposite, like any word from Hannibal could send him running far and fast instead of drawing him in, and in this case, he said the wrong thing and Will ran.

Hannibal should feel guilty as he pushes his hands into the interior of Will's jacket, for wishing it had retained some of Will's body heat while it hung forgotten in the hall. It's well-worn and has been mended, leading him to think that this is Will's favorite, possibly only, jacket. Will seems like the kind of person to have a favorite item of clothing and not buy another until that one is beyond help.

I'll need to make sure this is returned to him, Hannibal thinks as he pulls the jacket to his nose and inhales.

Atrocious aftershave that comes from a bottle with a ship on it, mostly around the collar, but beneath it, the smell of coffee, hints of motor oil, and an earthy musk that befits Will perfectly. Hannibal exhales heavily against the fabric, his cock stirring in his trousers, and he lets the jacket fall from his hands. It hangs there still, solemnly reminding him of clear blue eyes that never intentionally meet his and a stubbled jaw that he very much wants to kiss.

Hannibal forces himself to leave the hallway, intent on busying himself with cleaning up and putting away the leftover food. As he's washing the dessert plates, his phone chimes on the counter. He carefully dries the plate he's holding and sets it aside, then dries his hands on a kitchen towel and grabs his phone.

It's not a message from Will, unsurprising but disappointing nonetheless.

I wish you would reconsider.

Hannibal types a reply and hits send, then continues washing dishes.

I'm sorry, but I won't.

--

"Well?"

"Well what?"

"Are you going to tell me how your night with Will went?" Mischa asks as he invites himself into the house, grinning so wide that Hannibal wonders if his face doesn't hurt for it. His little

brother showing up the morning after the dinner party means he's perhaps hoping to catch Hannibal cooking breakfast for Will, so he can gloat about how well his clever plan worked.

Hannibal wishes he couldn't see that scenario so clearly in his mind -- Will waking up alone to the smell of breakfast filling the house, coming downstairs looking ravished and perfect, and flushing an attractive shade of red when Mischa showed up for breakfast. He sighs and closes the door, following Mischa into the house.

"He came by with a bottle of Bâtard-Montrachet and left in a hurry when he found out I was having a dinner party."

"*Ne!* Your puppy detective shows up on your birthday with a bottle of your favorite wine and you didn't cancel your dinner party *right then and there*?"

"It seemed rude. I wanted Will to stay, but he left as soon as I mentioned the party."

"You let him run away."

"I let him leave, because he wanted to."

"*Brolis*, you're the smartest person I know besides myself, yet somehow you're capable of doing something so unbelievably stupid," Mischa says, crossing his arms over his chest in frustration. "*Mene tse treba yak zuby v dupy*. I was going to have breakfast with you, but now I'm not so sure you deserve my company."

Hannibal knows that Mischa is truly upset with him when he slips into both Lithuanian and Ukrainian in one conversation. If he's honest, he's also upset with himself.

"I'll make you Eggs Benedict," Hannibal offers, knowing full well that he's resorting to bribery to get his brother to stay.

“You think I’m so easily bribed?” Mischa asks with a frown. Hannibal says nothing, just arches an eyebrow and waits. Seconds later, he can practically see Mischa’s resolve crumble against the promise of Hannibal making his favorite breakfast. “I am easily bribed. But I’m still mad at you.”

Hannibal smiles and heads towards the kitchen, starting first on coffee and then on gathering the ingredients he needs for Eggs Benedict. As he works, he thinks about Will and what he can do to salvage the man’s interest in him. He’ll be shocked if Will visits him at work now and Hannibal has no excuse to seek Will out at the police station.

Except for the jacket hanging by the door. Maybe he has one excuse.

“I wish you had told me you were having people over for dinner,” Mischa says, sipping at a cup of coffee. “Will is going to think I set him up for failure.”

“I don’t think the thought crossed his mind. He seemed certain that he was at fault.”

“You had better come up with a way to make this right, Hannibal.”

“I’m going to try.”

Chapter End Notes

Ne (Lithuanian) = No
Mene tse treba yak zuby v dupy. (Ukranian = (roughly translated) I need this like I need teeth in my ass (This one I found on google and I liked it a lot. I have no idea if this is actually a Ukranian saying or not.)
Brolis (Lithuanian) = Brother

5 Chandler Square = The address of Hannibal's house in the Red Dragon movie.

It's Hannibal's 40th birthday! Yes I did steal the scene from S01E07 "Sorbet" and twisted it to fit my needs. 8D

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

When the forecast promised snow, Will didn't anticipate that it would last all of Saturday night and into Sunday morning, or that it would bring near subzero temperatures with it. It's far too cold for any sane person to do anything this morning, but Bev had texted him at 7 o'clock sharp to let him know that their search warrant was granted by a judge, and that she now owes some favors to some people she'd rather not owe favors to.
As Will tries for the fifth time to start his car and the motor clicks and spins and fails to turn over, he wonders if it might make Bev feel better if Will owes her. He pulls out his phone and dials her number, head throbbing as he waits for her to answer.

Chapter Notes

Have a chapter! I love all of you, honestly. Your kind comments and feedback are motivating me to pump out this story that was just supposed to be a O N E S H O T and then it mutated on me into a beast. I struggled with this chapter, just because I always want to skip to the sex and it's so close. ;~; I'd never be able to write slow burn fic, holy crap.

Also, if you've never read Francis Dolarhyde's background (which is detailed quite a bit in the book and not so much in the show), you should go do that. Not saying what he did was justified by any circumstances, but hot damn did that guy have a rough childhood.

Unbeta'd, so if you see any mistakes, feel free to poke me on Tumblr. I'd greatly appreciate it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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“Graham where the hell are you at?”

“My car won’t start,” Will says, climbing out of said car and walking around to the front so he can lift the hood. “Pick me up and I’ll buy you Starbucks for a week.”

“You’re into cars and motors and junk, you can’t fix it?”

“In this balmy 7 degree weather? I’ll get right on that.”

“You’re lucky I’m such a good friend,” Bev says fondly, and Will can hear her car keys jingle. “Make it two weeks of Starbucks and I want the scoop on you and Hannibal.”

“Deal,” Will agrees quickly, cold seeping through his gloves and the dark coat he’s forced to wear since he forgot his jacket at Hannibal’s house. “If I’m a frozen corpse by the time you get here, remember me as I was.”

“A sassy bitch? How could I ever forget?” Bev laughs. “I’ll be there in ten minutes.”

Will hangs up the call and stares at his home screen, only slightly apprehensive to check his text messages. When he got home from Hannibal’s last night, full of self-loathing that had been allowed to stew on the drive, he made the poor decision to take a fifth of whiskey to bed. Just one glass turned into two glasses, which inevitably turned into more glasses than he remembers.

A cursory glance at his most recent texts assuages his fears. There are no drunken declarations, just a dismissive text sent to Bev and…

If you have a chance, please let me know you got home safely.

Will stares at it for a while, then locks the phone. He spends some time poking around under the hood of his car, suspecting that it's the starter that's gone bad. If he picks one up tonight, he can probably have it fixed in the next day or two, depending on how miserably cold it is.

True to her word, Bev shows up in just under ten minutes. She pulls up behind his car and rolls down the window. Will closes the hood and locks the car, shoving the keys into his pocket as he walks over to Bev's SUV.

"Two weeks of Starbucks and I want gossip," Bev says. "Those are my terms."

Will tries the handle on the car door and isn't even a little surprised to find it locked. "I already agreed to these terms. I can't facilitate your coffee addiction if I freeze to death."

"Fair enough," Bev concedes, sighing dramatically as she unlocks the doors.

Will climbs into the car and barely has time to buckle in before Bev pulls away. He pulls out his phone to send a quick reply to Hannibal, just to not leave him hanging.

I got home safe.

He shoves his phone into his jacket pocket and looks at Bev, who is side-eyeing him and clearly curious as to what he's doing.

"Texting Hannibal," he says before she can say anything. She grills him on the way to the station, and he tells her only the choice details of what happened the night before. He's not upset with anyone but himself, for thinking that maybe things might go well this time. Things never go well when Will is interested in someone.

--

Francis Dolarhyde looks completely unsurprised when the police show up at his door with a search warrant. In fact, the man is eerily calm as he holds open the door for Will, Bev, two officers, and two labrats from forensics. Reba sits in the living room, in the same recliner that Francis sat in the last time Will and Bev were here, and Francis sits on the couch, seemingly content to be watched by an officer as the house is gone through room by room.

They start with the kitchen and living room, followed by the bedrooms. The search of the house takes them a little over an hour, and reveals one other incriminating find: an empty gas can with red dirt on the bottom shoved into the back of a hall closet. Forensics bags it to preserve the dirt and any fingerprints, and Will starts the final sweep of the house before moving on to the truck.

"Whose shoes are these?" Will asks at one point, holding up the pair of old sneakers with red dirt on the heel.

Francis looks up and with a nod, he says, "They’re mine."

Will bags them as evidence to be processed in the lab against samples of the dirt from behind the Murphys' house. He goes through the Chevy Silverado next with a fine-tooth comb, taking a hammer from the back seat for evidence and noting a stain that smells like gasoline on the passenger’s side. He sits in the driver’s seat and tries to allow himself to slip into their arsonist’s perspective, but no pendulum swings behind his eyelids and when he opens his eyes he’s the same as he was. He’s missing something somewhere, as frustrating as that is.

Will walks back into the house and enters the living room, nodding at Bev to let her know that he’s done searching the truck.

"Mr. Dolarhyde, we'd like you to come with us, please," Bev says gently.

"Am I under arrest?" Francis asks.

"No. We'd just like to take you to the station for further questioning."

Will knows what she leaves unsaid, and so does Francis, judging from the grim look on his face. If they process this evidence and find enough to arrest him, whether he's going to the station now or later will make no difference.

Reba puts her head in her hands, shoulders shaking. Francis gets up and walks over to her, standing beside the chair and resting a hand on her shoulder. "It'll be alright, Reba. Let me get my medication and I'll go."

Francis disappears into the kitchen for a moment and reappears with a ziplock bag that contains a Monday through Sunday pill organizer. The officers lead Francis Dolarhyde out to one of the cars, with Will and Bev following shortly after them.

"You don't think this is our guy," Bev says quietly, glancing over at Will.

"I don't know," Will admits, watching the officers pull away from the house. "I've never met a killer that I couldn't empathize with. I tried to view things from Francis Dolarhyde's point of view and I couldn't. He's either not our guy or he's the most incognito psychopath I've ever met."

"What makes you call him a psychopath?"

"He's suspected of burning two homes to the ground with families inside and he looked you in the eye and convincingly denied being responsible."

"So you're saying he's crazy?" Bev asks.

"Psychopaths aren't crazy," Will says. "They're perfectly aware of their actions. But why now? What would have suddenly inspired him to start fires after two years of psychiatric treatment and four years of perfect behavior?"

"Stress? His job? The bad relationship with his kid?"

"Alright, say it is any of those things. Why leave so much evidence lying around for us to find?"

"You were the one who told me psychopaths want to be caught. Maybe he wants to be caught so he can stop for his family's sake."

The police reports mentioned that two weeks before Francis Dolarhyde tried to burn the house down with his family inside, there was a 911 call. Reba had found Francis in their master bathroom, unconscious but alive with a broken noose around his neck. He was released after a 48-hour mandatory suicide watch in the hospital, and when officers questioned him about it, he said he was trying to save his family from the 'Great Red Dragon'.

"Where is Miriam at with getting camera footage?" Will asks.

"The same place she was before," Bev sighs, shifting from foot to foot. "You would think some camera somewhere would have caught that truck driving from his house and to either crime scene, but it's a slow process trying to find one. But If we get any footage in our time frame and a semi-clear shot of Dolarhyde's face, we'll have a better case."

Bev starts to walk towards the car, but Will remains rooted in front of the door. She looks over her shoulder at him when she realizes he's not following. "Will? You coming?"

Will doesn't know what compels him to do it, but he turns back and enters the house again. Bev calls his name, and whether she follows him or not, he doesn't much care.

Reba is sitting in the same chair. She lifts her head at the sound of Will's footsteps. "Who's there?"

"It's Detective Graham," Will says, walking slowly into the living room. "Mrs. Dolarhyde, may I ask you a few more questions?"

“I don’t think so,” Reba replies, frowning deeply. From where he stands, Will can see the tear stains on her cheeks. “Ben is out with friends, but he could be home any minute. This will just upset him.”

“They’re important questions. You don’t have to answer them, if you don’t want to.”

Reba sniffles, exhales shakily, and nods. “Alright.”

“Would you please tell me what happened six years ago?”

“I’m sure the police have a whole novel written about it,” Reba says, picking at the hem of her blouse.

“They do,” Will walks over to the couch and takes a seat. “I’ve read it. I want you to tell me what happened in your own words.”

“There’s nothing new to tell.”

“Humor me, please.”

Reba seems apprehensive, and for a few moments Will wonders if she’s going to tell him to leave.

“It was a Saturday. We both had the day off and Ben was home.”

“How old was Ben?” Will asks.

Reba folds her hands in her lap, quiet for a moment as she considers. “He had just turned 11 years old. We were going to pick a movie to watch after dinner as a family. I was sitting at the kitchen table, and Francis left the kitchen at some point. He was gone for so long that a pot of noodles on the stove started to boil over. I could hear it.

“I called for him a few times and he didn’t answer, so I went to find him. He was in our bedroom with Ben. I didn’t… I didn’t know that anything was wrong. Ben didn’t sound upset, he was just talking to his father. And I, I could smell gasoline, which didn’t make any sense.”

Reba pauses for a few long moments. Will is about to let her know that it’s alright if she doesn’t continue, but she soldiers on.

“Francis told me to sit on the bed, because he had something to show me. I sat down and Ben sat beside me, holding my hand. Something cold and metal pushed underneath my chin.” Reba swallows and wrings her hands. “It was the shotgun he kept for home security. He made me feel it so I would know what would happen if I tried to run. He took it away and I could hear him pouring something. I could smell the gas even stronger than before. He said that he couldn’t give us to *Him*, that it was better if we go with him. Then he struck a match and lit the room on fire.”

Fresh tears start to roll down Reba’s cheeks, and she wipes at them with the back of her hand.

“I’m sorry,” Will says, and he means it. He hates having to ask a survivor of a traumatic event to recall said event, but sometimes it’s a necessary evil.

“That wasn’t my husband that night,” Reba says tearfully. “That wasn’t the man I married.”

“I believe you. Where is Ben?”

“I told you, he’s out with friends.”

That's a lie, Will thinks. When Reba Dolarhyde lies, she covers her suprasternal notch, the vulnerable point at the base of her throat, with her hand. Accompanied by heavy swallowing and unnecessary jaw movement, she looks like the poster child for how to tell someone is lying. It's the first time she's outright lied, that Will knows of.

"Where is Ben?" Will asks again.

Reba's lower lip quivers and she shakes her head. "I don't know."

"How often does he stay out late and not come home?" Will can tell from Reba's pained expression that he's struck a nerve.

"Lately, more often than not," Reba says miserably. "Francis and I have tried to talk to him, but he says nothing is wrong and locks himself in his room so he won't have to talk to us. I don't know what to do."

"What have you tried so far?"

"Talking, therapist, counselor… he wants nothing to do with any of it."

Will gets up from the couch and walks slowly over to Reba, gently resting a hand on her shoulder. "Thank you for answering my questions. Is there anyone you want us to call for you?"

"I have my phone," Reba rubs at her eyes and pulls the phone from the back pocket of her jeans. "I can call my mother."

"Good." Will turns to leave the living room, mulling over this new information.

"Detective Graham?"

Will doesn't look back, but stops walking. "Yes?"

"He really has tried very hard to get better," Reba says behind him. "Please don't use what happened in the past against him."

Will wants to reassure her, to let her know that he might be the only person who isn't convinced Francis Dolarhyde is responsible. Any sane person would see it as a continuation of what Dolarhyde failed to do all those years ago, except now he's burning other families alive instead of his own. His need to protect his family from the Red Dragon could have manifested itself as a need to set fire to other homes to appease the dragon and keep it from demanding he finish what he started.

Something isn't lining up and Will wants to get to the bottom of it. Now that they're holding Dolarhyde and they'll almost certainly have enough evidence to press charges, he's running short on time. Unless another fire is set with the same patterns while they're holding him, nothing is going to convince Jack this isn't their arsonist.

Will walks out of the house and into the cold, careful to shut the door behind him. He's not surprised to find Bev sitting in the SUV waiting for him, heat on full blast. She looks at him curiously at he climbs into the car.

"What did Reba say?"

"I'll tell you on the way."

"I've got something to tell you too. You're not going to like it," Bev says as they pull away from Dolarhyde's house.

"Starbucks prices just went up thirty percent?"

“Nope.”

“Jack’s ulcer is acting up?”

“Nuh uh.” Bev holds up her phone with her free hand and presses something on the screen. Jack’s pleasant voice fills the car: “Dolarhyde just walked into the damn station and says he wants to confess, but he’ll only talk to Will. Get your asses back here *now*.”

“Oh, fuck me.” Just when Will thought his hangover headache was gone, his temples start to throb with a vengeance.

“Maybe you should try that on Hannibal. He seems like he’d appreciate the direct approach.”

Will shoots her a withering look and sinks into his seat. “This isn’t right, Bev.”

“I know it’s not. What are you thinking?”

“I’m thinking Ben Dolarhyde is somehow a missing piece in this,” Will says, pulling his phone out of his jacket pocket. He sends a text to Miriam.

I need an APB on Benjamin Dolarhyde, age 17, person of interest.

--

At the police station, Jack joins Will behind the two-way glass that looks into the interrogation room where Francis Dolarhyde sits. As tempting as a confession is, the ideal situation is to have the lab process the evidence first and then get the confession from Dolarhyde. A confession right after being taken in and without a lawyer present could be considered false confession, especially in the case of a person taking medications for mental illness.

“I have to let you know before we start that you have the right to legal counsel and I would recommend that you don’t say anything without a lawyer present,” Bev says on the other side of the glass.

“In that case, I think I’d like to call my lawyer.”

“You said he would only give a confession to me?” Will asks, watching Dolarhyde for a few moments longer before he turns to Jack.

“That’s what he said. We’re going to keep him comfortable for now while Zeller and Price process the evidence you found.” Jack actually *smiles*, which startles Will a little more than he’d like to admit. “This is going to button up nicely, Will. You and Bev did a great job with this.”

Will wets his lips with a swipe of his tongue and stuffs his hands into the pockets of his slacks. “How much time can you give me before we go in for the confession?”

Jack studies him critically for a few seconds. “You don’t think we have the right guy?”

“Call it intuition or a gut feeling or whatever, I don’t know. I just know that there’s more to this.”

“It’s just after 10,” Jack says, looking at his watch. “I can give you 24 hours to work whatever theories you have, but after that we’ll need to start closing this out. We can only hold him for 48 hours without officially charging him, and if that dirt matches the dirt from the first house, I’m charging him confession or no confession unless you can bring me something very convincing.”

“24 hours, got it.”

“And Will?”

“Hm?”

“Get some damn sleep. You look like you just crawled out of a shallow grave.”

Sentiments like that are the way that Jack shows concern for other people, which suits Will just fine. He leaves the room with a nod and runs into Bev in the hallway.

“So?” she asks.

“I’ve got 24 hours.”

Bev looks as surprised as Will felt just moments ago. “Whatever it is that you’ve got up your sleeve, you better work fast.”

--

Will spends the rest of the day digging through old case files and gathering what information he can on Benjamin Dolarhyde, which turns out to be a difficult undertaking when your person of interest is a minor with no prior criminal record. Miriam does manage to catch what is probably Dolarhyde’s truck on a camera outside a local bank branch in the appropriate time frame, but the quality is so poor that neither the driver nor the license plate can be seen clearly.

He presses his luck and works until just after 6 o’clock, which is when Bev appears beside him and kicks his chair. “Hey, I’m leaving. Am I giving you a ride home or are you getting an Uber?”

“A ride home,” Will says, tilting his neck side to side to crack it. “I’m at a standstill.”

Will stands up and grabs his coat from the back of his chair, pulling it on. He starts to run his hands through his hair to tame it, but stops because he knows it's probably futile at this point. Jack said hours ago that Will looked like he'd crawled out of a shallow grave. He probably looks like the walking dead at this point.

When he looks up, Bev is already gone. Will sighs and walks quickly out to the parking lot. He spots Bev's car parked in her usual spot, right where she left it this morning, and he jogs over to the passenger's side.

Will tries to open the door, but it's locked. Bev lifts her shoulders at him innocently.

"Bev, not funny. Open the door."

Will tries it again and Bev waves at him.

"I can't hear you, Will! I'll see you later!"

Will stands there dumbfounded as she drives away. He considers using his phone to get an Uber, but decides he's not in the mood to deal with a chatty driver on the way home. Maybe Zeller is still around and he can bribe him with… what in the hell does Zeller even like?

As he's considering his options, a black, expensive-looking motorcycle pulls up alongside him in the parking lot and the person riding it removes his helmet.

Of course you own a motorcycle.

"You look troubled, Will," Hannibal says, somehow not suffering from helmet hair even a little bit. Will wonders if he's even human. And really, how can it be fair that someone can look equally good in a t-shirt, vest and tie, and leather jacket?

“My car died this morning and Bev was my ride today, but she just drove off.”

“I can take you home,” Hannibal offers.

“I don’t want to impose.”

“It would be my pleasure.”

Will watches Hannibal’s expression carefully, trying to discern if he feels any hesitation from the man, and decides there’s nothing. Just that familiar patience and a warm smile that makes Will feel like he’s going to melt from the inside. He hasn’t given much of a thought to Hannibal since this morning and now that the man is in front of him, flesh and blood and dripping in leather, he wants to drown out everything else.

Hannibal must take Will’s silence for uncertainty, because he continues. “If it would make you feel better, I can impose on you.”

“How so?”

“Come home with me and allow me to make you dinner.”

Will can practically hear Bev’s voice in his ear: *Like a date?! Ooooh Will Graham, get some!*

He chews at his bottom lip briefly, then nods and climbs onto the back of Hannibal’s motorcycle before his brain can create a slide-by-slide presentation on why this is a terrible idea. There’s a crisis moment where he really wants to wrap his arms around Hannibal’s waist, but he doesn’t know how well that would go over. He opts instead to put his arms behind him and brace himself on the seat, which seems perfectly reasonable since they barely know each other.

A moment later the bike jerks forward and Will nearly tumbles backwards, arms flailing for something to hold on to. It comes to an abrupt stop, and he would have already fallen off, if not for Hannibal reaching back and grabbing the front of Will's coat to steady him. And when did that happen?

"Please hold onto me, Will. I don't want you falling," Hannibal says, sounding just a little too sincere for Will's taste.

Will frowns and sets his hands on Hannibal's waist, then thinks *fuck it* and wraps his arms fully around the man in front of him. "Why are you at the police station anyway?"

"I came to seek you out, after you left in a hurry the other night. I felt like I should explain."

"You don't have to explain."

"Mischa didn't know that I was hosting a dinner party," Hannibal says over his shoulder. "My guests also weren't aware that it was my birthday. I was up for a promotion to Assistant Fire Chief and I wanted to turn them down in the nicest possible way."

"Why would you turn that down?"

"I'll tell you everything over dinner. No guests, just us."

Will doesn't have to see Hannibal's face to know that he's smiling -- he can hear it in the man's voice. Hannibal pulls on his helmet, and Will sighs and holds on tight as they take off, surprisingly warm despite the falling temperature.

Just us.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter as I have it laid out is almost exclusively Will and Hannibal. I'm looking forward to it. :>

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Hannibal takes a step towards him, then another, looking every bit the part of the predator approaching skittish prey. Will's heart hammers wildly in his chest. "Hannibal," he says quietly, watching the way the man's pupils dilate and his lips part on a heavy breath.

He likes that reaction, so he says it again. "Hannibal."

Chapter Notes

I actually had a social life this past weekend, which was weird and set me behind on writing this, but HERE IS ANOTHER CHAPTER. Just a heads up, I took some liberties with Hannibal's house layout. I gave him a garage (does he have a garage? he does now) and stole his office to use it as a library, since he doesn't have an office in this universe. 8D

As always, this is unbeta'd and I try my best to read over it and make corrections, but reading my own writing gives me hives. If you see any mistakes, feel free to poke me on Tumblr and let me know!

Hannibal might be speeding or going well under the limit, Will has no idea. He just holds on and watches the lights of the city pass by, letting every thought slip away to quiet his mind. It's a frighteningly easy thing to do, to trust that Hannibal will get them safely to their destination. Will has a hard enough time trusting people he knows, nevermind someone he just met days ago, but for once he forces himself to relax and let go of every worry and anxiety clouding his mind. Even if just for a few minutes.

Will rests his chin on cold leather and closes his eyes, cool air rushing against his face and filling his lungs. It brings to mind images of fishing in the winter, when his father would bundle Will up and take him out on the boat at Calcasieu Lake, for company when he was very young, then to fish when he grew older. Some of his best memories are of fishing on that lake, even the one time he fell into it and felt certain he would freeze to death.

A light touch on his hand brings Will ever so gently back to the present, and it takes a moment for him to realize they're at a stoplight.

Hannibal turns his head and says something, but his words are muffled by the helmet. Will blinks at him and then at the road over his shoulder. He recognizes it as the long stretch before Hannibal's neighborhood, and it's nearly empty after 6 o'clock on a Sunday. All of the snow from the previous night is piled off to the sides. Hannibal turns the throttle to rev the bike and keeps his head turned, waiting.

Will swallows heavily and nods, and the hand resting on his squeezes, wordlessly encouraging him to hold on tighter. He complies, arms locking tight between one breath and the next, his chest pressed tight to Hannibal's back.

There is no time to doubt his decision. They take off like a shot when the light turns green, picking up speed quicker than Will imagined they would. He holds his breath as they accelerate, wind whipping through his hair and making his eyes water, forcing him to squeeze them shut and duck his head behind Hannibal's shoulder.

With his eyes shut, it feels like they're flying. He can't keep the grin from his face or the laughter from bubbling up in his throat. It's only a mile stretch of road and they could be running every traffic light on it, but he can't bring himself to care.

Will feels the bike start to slow and he opens his eyes, leaning slightly with Hannibal when they make the right into the neighborhood, followed shortly by a left onto Chandler Square. They pull into Hannibal's driveway and into his garage, next to what Will recognizes as an older Bentley in what looks like pristine condition. Another tap on his hand draws his attention away from the car, tilting his head towards Hannibal in question.

Hannibal removes his helmet and says good-naturedly, "I'm loath to ask it of you, Will, but we won't be doing much of anything tonight if you don't release me."

"Right. Sorry." Will removes his hands from Hannibal's waist and puts one on the man's shoulder to help balance him as he climbs off the motorcycle.

“Don’t be.” Hannibal climbs off as well and leads the way into the house, pressing a button on the wall to close the garage door behind them. They enter a mudroom that Will hasn’t seen before, with only a single thick coat hanging on the hooks on the wall. *Of course a house like this would have a separate entryway for the garage*, he thinks as he unbuttons his own coat and shrugs it off.

It’s only as he lays his coat over his arm and turns his head to ask if he should hang it here does he realize that Hannibal is watching him intently, eyes so dark they’re near unrecognizable, and the words die on his lips.

Will doesn’t know how he ever believed Hannibal wasn’t interested in him, when the man is capable of looking at him like *that*. Like he’s the only important thing in the room, the world, possibly the universe.

Hannibal takes a step towards him, then another, looking every bit the part of the predator approaching skittish prey. Will’s heart hammers wildly in his chest. “Hannibal,” he says quietly, watching the way the man’s pupils dilate and his lips part on a heavy breath.

He likes that reaction, so he says it again. “Hannibal.”

The slow steps continue, and Hannibal gets close enough that Will starts matching his steps in the opposite direction, until his back meets the door leading to the garage and there are just a handful of inches of empty space between them. Hannibal raises his hand and brushes his knuckles over Will’s cheek, skin to skin and impossibly warm, and Will exhales shakily, “Hanni-”

He doesn’t get to finish. Hannibal swallows his name, absorbs every shuddering sigh and moan with how he licks his way into Will’s mouth. Will parts his lips and their tongues slide together, slick and wet, the tip of a sharp canine catching his lower lip in a perfectly painful way. His hands slip over Hannibal’s shoulders and into his hair, gripping the ashen strands tight in his fingers when Hannibal breaks the kiss and turns his attention instead to Will’s neck with teeth and tongue. Every muscle in Will’s body feels tight like a bowstring about to snap, every nerve alight with how fucking good it feels to *touch* someone again.

Will pushes his hips forward seeking friction against Hannibal’s thigh, panting at the ceiling when Hannibal does the same and grinds his cock against Will’s lower belly. Hannibal’s free

hand pulls the collar of Will's shirt to the side, and he feels the scape of teeth against the place where neck meets shoulder, different in its promise, offering pain and pleasure without the need for words. Will jerkily nods his head, and the bite when it comes is sharp and perfect, making his cock throb painfully and his knees go weak.

After several soothing passes of his lips and tongue, Hannibal lifts his head and pulls back enough to look at Will. Will can't understand at first why the man would stop something that feels so fucking wonderful, but he takes a deep breath and waits, eyes on Hannibal's mouth which looks as abused as Will's feels.

"I apologize," Hannibal says with what looks like great difficulty, but doesn't remove his hand from Will's face, thumb finding Will's lower lip and pushing it out of shape. It feels sore, swollen and overused. "I shouldn't have kissed you before dinner."

Will can't help but grin at how disheveled and aroused, yet contrite Hannibal looks. How is he even real? "Don't stop."

Hannibal exhales through his nose and pushes his thumb against Will's mouth. Will parts his lips and runs his tongue over the pad of it, pleased to see the way Hannibal's dark eyes widen. Given the chance, despite how painfully out of practice he is, he would happily suck Hannibal's cock tonight, if they get past whatever internal crisis is giving Hannibal reason to pause. There's something there behind his obvious desire currently pressing into Will's stomach, a propriety and politeness that he hadn't expected but should have. A person suit, perfectly controlled and considerate, with a predator lurking beneath.

He's never wanted someone more in his life. Feeling uncharacteristically bold, Will meets Hannibal's gaze, lifting his brows just slightly as he murmurs, "Please."

Please don't stop touching me, his traitorous mind whispers. *Please.*

He's not disappointed. Hannibal descends on him again, pinning him to the door bodily, hands working in the scant space between them to unzip Will's pants. "Manipulative boy."

You're not that much older than me, Will thinks. Something about Hannibal calling him *boy* has him nearly coming right then, arousal aching like a bruise in his belly, and that's nearly a reality when the man pushes his hand into Will's briefs and wraps long fingers around his cock.

God, he forgot how good that feels. Will tries to push his hips towards Hannibal, but there's no room between them and Hannibal is more solid than Will imagined, strong and hard to move. That ticks a lot of boxes and brings some long-buried fantasies to mind. Maybe, if whatever this is lasts longer than tonight, they can explore that further.

Hannibal noses at Will's cheek and tightens his grip on Will's cock, thumbing through the sticky wetness gathered at the tip. His breath is hot on Will's ear. "Stay with me, Will."

"I'm here," Will sighs, biting into his lower lip to stifle the moan that tries to escape when Hannibal starts to stroke up and down in a slow rhythm. He seeks out Hannibal's mouth, tugging at the man's hair to make him aware of what Will wants, and he gets it, a heated kiss that has his chest heaving when they break apart.

Will watches with bated breath as Hannibal drops to his knees before him, pulling down Will's pants and boxers to rest just below his balls and looking up through the fringe of his hair with a worshipful gaze that Will hasn't done anything to deserve.

And then Hannibal leans forward and without any preamble takes the length of Will's cock in his warm, slick mouth. Will bites into his knuckles viciously to stifle a whimper, and his other hand finds itself back in Hannibal's hair, fingers threading through the soft strands, curling and releasing with each pull of Hannibal's lips around his dick. "Hannibal."

Hannibal hums around his mouthful, slowing the bobbing of his head just enough that he can look up at Will, smiling with just his eyes. Will feels every bit like he's being devoured, and who knows if his legs are going to keep holding him up, thighs trembling like they are. Hannibal seems to sense Will's concern, because he lifts an arm and lays it across Will's hips, pinning him there against the door so he can't do much else but take what Hannibal gives him.

He doesn't know how long he's able to hold it together, it could be seconds, minutes, or longer, but when he feels his orgasm building in his balls and the base of his spine, he

honestly tries to warn the man sucking his cock so enthusiastically. It seems rude not to. “Hannibal, I’m going to…”

Hannibal takes Will to the root, the head of his dick pushing into the back of the man’s throat once, twice, three times, and all the air feels like it’s left the room. Will shudders and comes harder than he has in a very, very long time, the edges of his vision going white as Hannibal makes a hungry sound and swallows every mouthful rhythmically, only pulling back when Will is completely spent.

Will leans heavily against the door to the garage, panting like he ran a marathon. Hannibal carefully tucks him away into his briefs and pulls up his pants, zipping and buttoning them for him. He looks painfully attractive like that, with disheveled hair and lips swollen red from sucking, and Will grabs the man as he stands, bringing their lips together so he can lick the taste of himself from Hannibal’s mouth.

“Let me,” Will offers when they pull apart, his brain slowly returning to a functioning state but not quite there. He tries again. “Let me take care of you.”

“No need,” Hannibal says, brushing his thumb over Will’s jaw. Will understands after a brief moment of confusion what Hannibal means, and he feels his cheeks grow hot. Hannibal got off just from giving him head. That’s either a serious compliment or an oral fixation. Maybe both. Either way, it’s hot as sin.

Will smiles and leans forward to peck Hannibal’s lips, feeling unreasonably happy. He doesn’t want to say anything to ruin the moment, though he knows it has come and gone. Some cynical part of him expects to be thrown out, but judging from how Hannibal is looking at him now, so painfully fond and somewhat mystified, he suspects the evening is far from over. He wishes he had more time.

“I’d still like to make dinner for you,” Hannibal says, apparently reading Will’s thoughts. “I had everything planned.”

“Did I ruin your plans?”

“No, just rearranged them.” Hannibal smiles and thumbs at Will’s bottom lip. “Do you eat meat, Will? Any dietary restrictions?”

“I do, and none at all.”

“Good.”

There’s a long moment where Hannibal’s gaze falls on Will’s mouth and Will thinks they might not make it to dinner after all, but the man just presses a chaste kiss to his lips and turns away to walk out of the mudroom. Will notices his coat in a heap on the floor a few steps ahead of him (he really doesn’t remember dropping it) and he picks it up as he follows after Hannibal into the house.

--

Hannibal makes sure Will is comfortable in the kitchen with a glass of whiskey before he leaves to change his clothes. He comes back in a pair of dark sleep pants and a red V-neck sweater that looks incredibly soft, and he kisses Will again before starting on dinner. Although the offer is open for Will to take his whiskey to the library, which is a room he wants to see badly at some point, he opts to sit on a barstool and watch Hannibal cook, offering light conversation when he isn’t worried about distracting him.

Dinner is chicken, andouille, and shrimp jambalaya, a medley of flavors Will hasn’t tasted in close to ten years. He didn’t grow up poor, but not rich either, and although his father made decent money as a mechanic, they still fished and ate mostly fish. Smoked fish jambalaya was made in large batches and eaten throughout the week, which was enough to make him sick of it at the time. Now it reminds him of home.

Will wonders if Hannibal chose this particular meal on purpose, if the man somehow knows that Will grew up in Louisiana, but he doesn’t ask. Whether he did or not, the effort is appreciated and it tastes incredible.

Once Will is stuffed full of amazing food and feeling pleasantly buzzed, Hannibal takes him to the library.

“Some of these books have to be a hundred years old,” Will says, fingers hovering over the spines of some very, very old looking classics, including a copy of *Ulysses* that he has a feeling is worth more than his car. A lot more.

“Some, yes. Some are much older. If you see anything you’d like to read, please feel free.”

Will looks over his shoulder at Hannibal, who looks perfectly content to lean against a desk and sip at a glass of wine. He wants to ask how a fire lieutenant lives in a million dollar house and has a collection of rare books and a kitchen with three ovens and probably even more ridiculous and beautiful things that Will hasn’t seen yet, but curiosity isn’t enough to make him forget his manners. If Hannibal wants to tell him, he will in time.

The title of a book catches his eye somewhere down the row: *A Quaint Treatise on Flies and Fly-Making* by An Old Fisherman. The date on the spine reads 1876. Something in his chest tightens as he considers it.

“You’ve seen something.” Hannibal’s voice next to his ear makes Will jump. He hadn’t even heard the man move.

“I enjoy fly fishing,” Will says, a hint of remorse creeping into his voice. He touches the shelf in front of the book with his fingertips. “I make flies when I have the time, even though I don’t fish much anymore.”

“Difficult to find time away from catching killers, I’m sure.”

“Very difficult.”

Will lifts his hand and lets his fingers hover over *A Quaint Treatise on Flies and Fly-Making,* imagining himself pulling it from the shelf and curling up in an armchair to read it. As he’s thinking about it, Hannibal’s hand covers his and gently places his fingers on the spine of the book, his other arm wrapping around Will’s waist. Will’s breath catches at the intimacy of the gesture.

“You should have it,” Hannibal says easily, like he’s gifting a cheap paperback to Will and not a rare antique. “You’re the type of person it was meant to belong to. Someone who can appreciate it.”

“I don’t know how to take care of it properly.”

“Nothing that a little research wouldn’t fix. Mischa tells me you can Google anything these days.”

Will leans against Hannibal and huffs out a laugh, but he doesn’t move to pull the book from the shelf. He’s never been particularly motivated or impressed by physical possessions, so the fact that he *wants* something so badly is a little worrying. “Even then, I shouldn’t.”

“Is it so bad to allow yourself to have something you want?” Hannibal asks.

“That depends, I guess.”

“On how worthy you deem yourself of the thing you desire?”

Exactly, Will thinks, shivering when Hannibal curls his hand around Will’s and helps him pull the book out. The cover is an attractive shade of blue-green with decorative leaves imprinted into it and the title in gold in the middle. He holds it in his hands reverently, wondering what the inside of such a book might be like.

“It’s beautiful,” Will says, rubbing his thumb over the cover. Hannibal’s hand no longer rests on his, there is no physical reason he couldn’t put the book back in its place, but he doesn’t particularly want to.

“It’s yours.” Hannibal noses against Will’s temple, voice low and even. “I’ll keep an eye out for any others, now that I know what you like.”

Will licks his lips and pulls the book close to his chest, turning so he can look at Hannibal properly. “Thank you.”

“My pleasure, Will.”

Hannibal gives him space then, returning to sit on the desk and grabbing his glass of wine. Will spends a few more minutes looking at the titles, noticing some that he recognizes and others that he’s never seen before in his life. There seems to be no reasoning behind the sorting of Hannibal’s library. Fiction and nonfiction intermingling, books in foreign languages mixed with English. He likes it, that in some ways Hannibal is so apparently human and not perfect.

As more time passes, Will’s thoughts drift to the case and he feels incredibly guilty for spending precious time indulging himself. A quick glance at his phone reveals it’s just past 9 o’clock.

“I hate to ask, but would you mind taking me home?” Will asks, glancing over at Hannibal.

Hannibal frowns, but nods his head. “Of course. I apologize if I’ve done something to offend you.”

“Not at all, I promise. I have to be in early tomorrow and I want to at least try to sleep.”

“You could stay here. I believe it’s started snowing again.”

God, does he want to with every fiber of his being. The thought of falling asleep with Hannibal and waking up with the man pressed against him is tempting. Unbelievably tempting. Going home to a cold apartment sounds miserable.

“I shouldn’t.”

“But do you want to?”

Yes.

“I sweat,” Will blurts out. “And I have nightmares.”

“Is that so?” Hannibal says, humming thoughtfully. “Would you be amenable to trying something?”

“Trying what, exactly?”

Hannibal stands up and waves for Will to follow him. “I have a home remedy.”

Will follows him out of the library, still clutching the book to his chest with one arm.

--

Hannibal’s home remedy turns out to be a hot cup of tea that smells like herbs, honey, and garden dirt. Will agreed to stay just for the sake of not letting the opportunity go to waste, he even turned down Hannibal’s offer of letting him stay in a guest bedroom, but he’s extremely skeptical that Hannibal’s tea is going to do anything. Still, he drinks it in several long swallows and makes a face at the end, wishing he had a shot of whiskey as a chaser.

“So,” Will says, sufficiently bundled beneath the sheets and blankets on Hannibal’s enormous, soft bed. “Count Lecter, huh?”

“I did promise to tell you about that, didn’t I?” Hannibal muses as he exits the bathroom, pulling his red sweater over his head. Will stares at Hannibal’s chest, transfixed by the

smooth definition of his muscles, the pelt of ashen chest hair, and the slight softness around his middle, no doubt from enjoying his own cooking. He's stunning to look at.

"You don't have to."

"I'm a descendent of Hannibal the Grimm, who built the castle that we called home in Lithuania," Hannibal says, climbing into the opposite side of the bed. "My father was Count Lecter before he died and since I'm his eldest son, the title passed to me."

"You're European nobility?" Will asks.

"I am. You're the only other person besides Mischa who knows the truth. The company at the station think he calls me that to tease me." Hannibal sits against the headboard, leaning over to grab a book from his nightstand. "Our parents died when we were young and we tried to manage on our own, but this was a dark period for Lithuania. Food was scarce. Lawlessness was the norm. Mischa and I were found and taken to an orphanage, where we spent five years until our Uncle Robertus finally located and adopted us."

Will puts his head on the pillow and relaxes into it, lying on his side so he can look at Hannibal. "Your uncle took five years to find you?"

"He and my father weren't close. It took quite a while for the lawyers from the estate to locate him, and by then we were a part of a very corrupt, poorly managed system."

"That sounds awful," Will says, starting to feel relaxed and sleepy. Normally it takes whiskey and complete darkness to even get him to this point, and even then he tosses and turns trying to get comfortable. He could get used to this.

"It was," Hannibal agrees, holding the book in his lap but not opening it, his eyes fixed on Will.

"Thank you for telling me."

“Thank you for listening.”

“What was in that tea?” Will asks quietly, head feeling impossibly heavy where it lies on the pillow. “Anything illegal?”

Hannibal reaches out to stroke Will’s hair, fingers pushing through his curls gently. “Chamomile, valerian root, lemon balm, lavender, passion flower and a little honey. I made it for Mischa nightly when we were younger.”

“Mischa had nightmares?”

“Horrific ones,” Hannibal agrees, cupping the side of Will’s face and rubbing his thumb back and forth over his temple. “I had to supplement it with another tea for a short while, one made of orange peel, cinnamon, kava, cloves, and milk, before he became used to sleeping through the night without waking.”

Will is sound asleep before Hannibal says anything else.

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

> *“Come here,” Hannibal says gently behind him. The way he says it leaves plenty of opportunity for Will to decline and get out of bed, get dressed, and have an Uber waiting outside in twenty minutes. There is no demand, just a request, made by the most reasonable man Will has ever met. How could he deny it?*

Chapter Notes

> These chapters are taking me a little longer to write because they were the least developed, but I promise I'm working on it! There should be two more chapters and possibly a few timestamps. Thank you SO MUCH to everyone who has left comments and kudos. You're fueling my inspiration and making me want to write, so thank you.
>
> As always, this is unbeta'd, so feel free to poke me on Tumblr if you see any mistakes!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Will wakes up, the room is dark and he doesn’t immediately recognize his surroundings. The bed is too soft to be his, the sheets too high of a thread count, and there’s a warm, solid chest beneath his cheek, rising and falling in the even rhythm of sleep. He shifts slightly and tilts his head up, gaze falling on Hannibal’s sleeping face. The only light is the soft glow from the hallway through the open door.

He looks peaceful like this, face relaxed and unguarded, hair falling soft over his forehead, and Will doesn’t want to wake him, since it’s probably around 2 in the morning. He looks around for a clock to confirm and spots the one on Hannibal’s bedside table.

5:23 a.m.

Will blinks a few times to clear his vision. That definitely can’t be right. They went to bed just after 9:30 the night before, and he remembers drinking the tea Hannibal offered him, but not falling asleep. He doesn’t recall falling asleep at all. Come to think of it, he doesn’t

remember waking up multiple times either. He lifts his hand and presses it to the t-shirt Hannibal lent him. The cotton is still soft and dry, not drenched in sweat and plastered to his skin.

Apparently there was no sweating, no nightmares, no waking up multiple times during the night. As far as he knows, he slept through the whole night and he actually feels rested. He can't remember the last time that happened.

His fingers drift to the bite on his neck, pressing into it to feel it throb and ache beneath his touch, and he wonders what the mark looks like, whether it's started to fade already or not. A strange, heavy feeling starts to well up inside him, and he presses harder against the bite to distract himself from it, but it's impossible to avoid. There is no reason for it, no good reason for the tears welling up in his eyes or the crushing weight of relief making it hard to breathe. Will gently frees himself from Hannibal's hold and sits up, taking a deep breath and pushing the palms of his hands against his eyes, shoulders shaking from repressing the sounds that want to escape.

He's been exhausted for so long, so used to running on empty that he didn't know the extent of the damage.

"Will?" Hannibal asks, his voice raspy and accent more pronounced. "Is everything alright?"

Will doesn't trust himself to speak. "Mmm."

"Are you certain?"

"Yeah. No. I swear I'm not a crazy person that cries when he wakes up in bed with someone," Will laughs bitterly, wiping at his eyes with the back of his hand. "I just haven't had anything close to a good night's sleep in, shit… a really long time. I guess it wore me out more than I realized."

He feels a light touch on his lower back, fingers splayed and palm pressed flat, and Hannibal says nothing, apparently giving Will time to sort through his issues. Will is grateful, because

the urge to escape to the bathroom and hide is tempting. Hell, Hannibal would probably let him and not bring it up later.

“How did you end up becoming a firefighter?” Will asks, desperate to both change the subject and learn more about the man.

“My uncle died shortly after I finished my 4 year degree, but my aunt kept it a secret from me and made Mischa swear to keep it as well. I was here in the U.S. at that point, planning on enrolling in medical school, and she didn’t want me to worry, I suppose.”

Hannibal pauses, gently rubbing slow circles on Will’s back. Will leans slightly into his touch and listens.

“My uncle’s estate was in fairly grave financial trouble and much of what there was went to paying off substantial debts when he died. Gradually it became apparent that my aunt couldn’t afford to pay for the lifestyle she was used to or the place she lived, so she made plans to move back to Japan, to be with what remaining family she had. She offered Mischa the opportunity to come with her, but he didn’t want to risk not being able to see me for years, so he called me and informed me of the situation.

“The Lecter fortune my father left behind was tied up by his will until his eldest son turned 25. I was only 23 at the time, Mischa had just turned 16, and without my aunt’s support we again had nothing. So, I used what money I had left to buy Mischa a plane ticket and lease an apartment, then I applied to become a firefighter, passed both the written and physical test, and the rest is history.”

“Why did you stay with the fire department?” Will asks, looking over his shoulder at Hannibal.

“That’s the question, isn’t it?” Hannibal hums and stretches, languid and slow like a cat waking from a nap. “Two years later I inherited more than Mischa and I could spend in a lifetime. I suppose I could’ve done anything else.”

Will considers the man lying next to him, how easy and natural he seems in everything he does. He wonders what that might be like, to be so comfortable with who he is and to show it to someone else without fear of rejection. He wants to try.

"You stayed because you like the feeling of defying death," Will says, feeling himself slip into his empathetic nature like a second skin. "Saving lives is a byproduct, but not the primary attraction. You're certain that you won't die in any way that you deem unfitting of yourself, and every time you walk out unscathed you're proving yourself right."

The hand on his back disappears and Will worries that he's said too much. He knows with near certainty that he's right, but nobody appreciates having their motives read like an open book. He should have known better. Just because he's starting to understand Hannibal better doesn't mean he should say anything he feels like.

"Come here," Hannibal says gently behind him. The way he says it leaves plenty of opportunity for Will to decline and get out of bed, get dressed, and have an Uber waiting outside in twenty minutes. There is no demand, just a request, made by the most reasonable man Will has ever met. How could he deny it?

Slowly Will lies down again, facing Hannibal with just inches between them, cheeks flushed hot and eyes puffy from crying. When he dares to look up, Hannibal lays a hand on Will's cheek and rubs his thumb over it. There is no judgement in Hannibal's eyes, just an endless darkness behind them that Will wants to fall into.

"Hannibal."

The name barely leaves his mouth before a hand on his chest guides him onto his back and Hannibal moves on top of him, grabbing Will's wrists and pinning them above his head. Will's heart leaps into his throat and goes from steady to thundering in what feels like an instant. Hannibal looks at him with lust-dark eyes, voice perfectly calm as he asks, "How is it that you see me so clearly?"

"Hyper empathy disorder and years of profiling," Will sighs, tilting his head so Hannibal can press his lips against the bite on his neck. "You're harder to read than most people. It's a -- aahh -- nice change of pace."

“Fascinating.” When other people made similar comments about his empathy disorder, there was usually a condescending note in their voice, but Hannibal seems entirely sincere and almost awestruck. He presses a kiss to Will’s jaw, then another, soft lips rasping against his stubble. “How has anyone ever let you go?”

Too weird, too morbid, too empathetic.

He’s never particularly wanted anyone to let him go, but he’s never had a choice in the matter, and it should worry him, how hard he wants Hannibal to hold on.

Will turns his head and bumps his nose against Hannibal’s cheek, pleased when the man meets him in an open-mouthed kiss. He flexes his arms against Hannibal’s hold and finds his grip immovable. He does it again to feel the man’s fingers tighten, liking the way the bones in his wrist grind together.

Hannibal pulls back just slightly, breath mingling between their lips. “What do you want, Will?”

To hurt and be hurt, and have you not think less of me for it. He could have it -- Hannibal looks ready to give him the world, if he’d only ask.

“You,” Will says, feeling like he’s got one foot off a cliff. “Do you have…”

“Yes. Stay still.” Hannibal isn’t gone for long, and he returns with only a jar of what Will assumes is lubricant. Expensive lube, judging from the glass jar and gold lettering on the side. He looks at Hannibal as he returns, arms held obediently above his head, and the man must see the question on Will’s face. “As much as I’d like to have you now, you have work, don’t you?”

Eminently reasonable. Will’s throat clicks as he swallows, and he nods, watching as Hannibal slides a hand beneath the borrowed t-shirt. He pushes the fabric up until Will’s chest is exposed, his fingers leaving a trail of fire just beneath Will’s skin, cock twitching and leaking

in his briefs. As much as he wants Hannibal to fuck him and make him sore, make him remember this morning throughout the day, he hasn't done this in close to a year. Nothing more than fingers, anyway.

Hannibal leans forward and captures Will's lips in a kiss as he hooks his thumbs in the waistband of Will's briefs and pulls them down. Will looks for permission and finds it in Hannibal's smile, so he returns the favor, shoving Hannibal's sleep pants down just far enough to free his cock, and Will gets the first glimpse of it, stiff and reddened and curved between them. He's unsurprised to see that Hannibal is uncircumcised.

Hannibal reaches for the jar of lube and Will intercepts him, grabbing it from his hand and twisting off the lid. He knows that Hannibal is watching him as he dips his fingers into the jar and scoops out some of its contents. It has no smell, and it's a little too thick to be used for its intended purpose.

"Warm it between your hands," Hannibal says helpfully, resting his hand on Will's lower belly, stroking the skin there almost reverently.

Will puts his hands together and rubs the lube between them. It melts after only a few seconds, and Will reaches between them to wrap one slick hand around Hannibal's cock and the other around his own, stroking both from base to tip and back down in an easy rhythm. He smiles at Hannibal's sharp intake of breath, and asks, "Like this?"

Hannibal snakes a hand between them and lowers his hips, and Will understands immediately. He releases Hannibal's cock and shivers when it slides against his own, Hannibal's hand covering his as Will tries his best to wrap his fingers around both of them together. It's not unlike his touch in the library, guiding and firm but not forceful, helping Will take something he wants without expectation of something in return.

"Like this."

Will lets Hannibal take the lead then, keeping his grip just shy of too tight as Hannibal fucks the tight semi-circle of Will's fingers. Every slip-slide of their cocks together pulls a sigh or moan from Will, his stomach quivering as it's painted with precome with each thrust, and his heart hammers in his chest when Hannibal leans down to kiss him, parting Will's lips with his tongue.

He can feel his orgasm building in his lower belly, the muscles there clenching and coiling tight, and Will finds Hannibal's other hand where it's planted on the bed, wrapping his fingers around the man's wrist and digging his nails in to warn the man that he's close. Hannibal's thrusts continue, the space between them a mess of precome and lube and sweat, and it takes seconds more for the thread holding Will together to snap.

Will's back arches off the bed as he comes, ribbons of white shooting up his stomach and chest, nearly reaching his neck. His moan is lost inside Hannibal's mouth, a shudder rippling through him when Hannibal curls forward and comes, striping Will's front with wet heat. They stay like that for several long moments, kissing lazily and pushing around the mess on Will's stomach with slow thrusts as both men soften.

Will breaks the kiss, body completely lax in the haze following his orgasm, panting against Hannibal's parted lips, "Like that."

Hannibal smiles, his eyes dark red and fathomless, and says, "I'd like to make dinner for you tonight, if you're available. Something complemented by the wine you brought for my birthday."

Some part of Will glows from knowing that Hannibal saved the bottle of wine for the two of them. "You've got to stop offering to cook for me after we have sex. I'm going to start expecting it."

"Good."

Something tightens in Will's chest, and he looks down at the mess between them, about to apologize for getting come on the borrowed t-shirt when Hannibal bows his head and runs his tongue over Will's nipple, lapping up a streak of come that landed just below it. Will's feels his face and neck get hot, a mixture of pleasure and embarrassment that is only amplified when Hannibal pulls back, licking his lips and looking very pleased with himself.

"Delicious, as I expected."

Will groans as his cock twitches and valiantly tries to get hard again, but to no avail. If only he was still in his twenties. “You’re making it really difficult for me to want to get out of this bed and go to work.”

“That was the idea,” Hannibal says, patting Will’s hip as he leans back. The sight of him fully nude, skin glistening with sweat and cock soft against his thigh, makes Will’s mouth water. “Would you like to use the shower first, Will?”

“We could shower together,” Will offers, one foot still over the proverbial cliff and the other ready to follow.

Hannibal drags his fingernails down Will’s thigh, considering him with a hungry look up and down. Will can tell without needing to ask that Hannibal likes the sight of him this way.

“I’ll get the water started. Come join me when you’re ready.”

Will lies there just long enough to compose himself, as much as he can when he’s covered in quickly drying come, and joins Hannibal in the shower. Despite his best intentions to get clean, Will ends up pinned to the shower wall, and he's made dirty again before they get around to cleaning anything.

--

By the time Will and Hannibal are apparently done being tangled up in one another, it’s almost 6:30 and he can see the barest hint of light through the window. He’s checked his phone for any word on Francis or Ben Dolarhyde, but besides a text from Miriam that says ‘Dirt was positive match, no leads on BD’, everyone else is silent.

Downstairs, Hannibal presents him with a plate of meat and eggs that smells amazing, and greets him with a kiss that makes Will’s knees a little weak.

“Sausage and egg protein scramble to start the day,” Hannibal says as he sits down across the table with his own plate. “I’m very careful about what I put into my body.”

“It’s delicious,” Will says around the first mouthful, sharing a smile across the table. “Can I ask you something?”

“Of course, Will. Ask me anything.”

“How long have Bev and Mischa been texting each other?”

“For the past few days, as far as I know.”

He’s grateful that Hannibal doesn’t feel the need to ask for an explanation of how Will figured it out. “Bev told Mischa that my car died and Mischa told you.”

“Yes.”

“How did he get Bev’s number?”

“You gave him your phone so he could enter my number,” Hannibal says, looking a little guilty on Mischa’s behalf. “Mischa has a remarkably photographic memory. Given adequate time and motivation, he could have memorized your entire contact list.”

Will laughs and takes another bite of eggs. “I think we’re past needing their help, don’t you?”

“I do,” Hannibal agrees. “Mischa has good intentions, but I’ll speak with him and let him know not to meddle any more than he has.”

“I’ll do the same with Bev.”

“I still owe you an explanation, I believe.”

“Your promotion?” Will asks, chewing a bite of sausage.

“The Fire Chief retired a year ago and the position has remained unoccupied. The current Assistant Fire Chief wants to take the job, but he needs a replacement. I’m the most suitable choice.”

“But you don’t want to accept the position. Why?”

“I wouldn’t be able to watch out for Mischa, among other reasons. The Assistant Fire Chief oversees processes, budgets, and hiring. I would never leave the office again, except to dress up and put on a mask when required.”

“I guess it’s not like you have to worry about money.” The words leave his mouth before his brain can stop them. Will cringes and looks at Hannibal apologetically. “I’m sorry. That was rude.”

“Apology accepted,” Hannibal says with an amused smile. “I’ve also been considering doing something else for a while now. It would be very inconsiderate of me to accept a position and then leave shortly after.”

“You’ve been waiting for the right opportunity.”

“I’ve been waiting for something,” Hannibal replies enigmatically.

Will doesn’t ask what that something is.

--

“I’m fairly certain I could have found an outfit that would fit you.”

“If I show up to work wearing clothes that Bev’s never seen me in, she won’t let me live it down,” Will says, a little sad that he’ll have to take off the very comfortable, but slightly too large clothes that Hannibal let him borrow. He leads the way from the parking lot with Hannibal close behind, casting a brief, doleful glance at his very dead vehicle. “She’s going to spot the cashmere sweater from a mile away. The clothes from yesterday might have been slightly less suspicious, but I also want to make sure the apartment hasn't burned down.”

“I do want to see where you live,” Hannibal says behind Will.

“You’re going to be disappointed. My apartment isn’t nearly as aesthetically pleasing as your place.”

Hannibal winds an arm around Will’s waist and gently pulls him back before he can walk into the building. His breath is warm against Will’s ear. “When your case is solved and you have some free time, allow me to take you shopping.”

The back of Will’s neck grows hot, and some part of him knows that he’s lying when he says, “I’ll think about it.”

Of course you’re going to let him, because you want to see what he would pick for you. You wonder what he’d like to see you wear.

“That’s all I can ask,” Hannibal says as he releases Will, a smile evident in his voice.

As Will enters the lobby and walks over to the stairs, he tries not to let his mind linger on the fact that he left multiple possessions at Hannibal’s house: his jacket, his clothes from yesterday, and *A Quaint Treatise on Flies and Fly-Making.* He can tell himself he left them there for any other reason, but truly he left them for an excuse to go back.

I’m so screwed.

They climb the stairs in silence, three flights until they reach his floor. He pulls his keys out of his pocket and finds the one to his apartment, moving on autopilot as he approaches the door and pushes the key into the lock.

“Will, don’t--”

Will can’t stop himself from pushing open the door, not even for the pure note of fear in Hannibal’s voice, and he knows within that split second that he’s made a mistake. The apartment seems to suck in a huge breath, and suddenly Hannibal is in front of him as they’re both thrown back across the hall.

Will hits his head hard against the wall and everything goes dark.

Chapter End Notes

S O R R Y

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

> *For a second, Will's eyelids flutter and the light is unbearably bright between them. He might be hearing colors and tasting sounds for all he knows and as fucking disoriented as he is.*
>
> *"Will? Will?"*
>
> *Somewhere in his haze he hears the word seizure and he wants to let Hannibal know that he's fine, everything will be fine, but he slips into the dark again before he's able to.*

Chapter Notes

> This took me forever! Agh! A bunch of IRL shit went haywire and writing had to take a bit of a backseat. But I think I'm back now, and I have so many other new ideas for Hannigram and rarepair fics I want to write. :3 Again, a REALLY BIG thank you to the people who commented and left kudos. You're amazing people and you inspire me to continue, so thank you so so so much.
>
> Just one more chapter after this! I think. I planned for more smut directly after this chapter, so depends on how lengthy the chapter gets. Again, this isn't beta'd, so please excuse my mistakes and make me aware of them over on Tumblr if you're so inclined.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Will, can you hear me?"

Of course I can hear you. Why wouldn't I be able to hear you?

Distantly, Will is aware of other people talking around him, but all he truly cares about is that Hannibal is nearby. Somewhere.

"How old is he?"

“31.”

“He’s been unresponsive since he hit his head?”

“Yes.”

For a second, Will’s eyelids flutter and the light is unbearably bright between them. He might be hearing colors and tasting sounds for all he knows and as fucking disoriented as he is.

“Will? Will?”

Somewhere in his haze he hears the word *seizure* and he wants to let Hannibal know that he’s fine, everything will be fine, but he slips into the dark again before he’s able to.

--

“Any progress on getting in to see your puppy detective?”

Hannibal frowns deeply at Mischa and his little brother immediately holds up two cups of coffee in a gesture of peace. Mischa had rushed to the hospital when he heard the news, and he’s been sitting in the waiting room with Hannibal for the past hour while they wait for the initial police blockade of Will’s hospital room to disperse.

Will fought against being admitted to the hospital, but he was unconscious when Hannibal carried him from the apartment building, and he had a mild seizure when paramedics were working on him. Hannibal’s opinion had been the deciding factor, and what could he do except say that yes, Will should spend the night in the hospital for observation.

Hannibal doesn't believe in regretting the past, but he sorely wishes he had put his hand between Will's head and the wall. He would rather have broken bones than see Will harmed in any way.

"Beverly was here while you were in the E.R. getting checked out," Mischa says, and Hannibal wonders when his brother found himself on a first name basis with Beverly Katz, but he doesn't ask. "The whole floor was swarming with police. They take it very serious when one of their own is injured."

"Did they question you?" Hannibal asks.

"Of course they did," Mischa pauses to sip at his coffee. "I told them nothing but good things, of course."

Hannibal smiles fondly at his little brother and takes the extra cup of coffee from him. "I assume Detective Katz must have believed whatever you told her, otherwise I would be in handcuffs at the very least."

"We have an understanding, I think."

"Understanding?"

"That nobody who looks at Will the way you do could be responsible for this," Mischa says with a shrug. "Right now, for example, you look like the world is ending because you can't verify with your own two eyes that Will is alright."

Hannibal sighs and says nothing. He takes a long drink of coffee that burns as it goes down, but does little to warm him.

"Brolis."

Hannibal looks at Mischa expectantly.

For someone so free-spirited and happy, at this moment Mischa looks more serious than Hannibal has seen him in years. “There wasn’t anything you could have done differently.”

“I beg to differ,” Hannibal says. He could have done everything differently -- he could have kept Will warm and safe and occupied in his bed for longer, insisted that Will wear the clothes he’d borrowed, and taken him directly to work despite his half-hearted protests. Hannibal knew that Will wanted to keep wearing Hannibal’s clothes, could hear the touch of loss in his voice when he spoke, and he should have followed his instincts as surely as he ever has.

“They know who started the fires,” Mischa sips at his cup of coffee, but doesn’t take his eyes off of Hannibal. Hannibal is grateful then that they can speak freely in their native tongue. The chance of someone who speaks Lithuanian overhearing and understanding what they’re talking about is infinitesimally small.

“Who?”

“I overheard them talking about it. They had a suspect in custody, but the fires were set while he was detained.”

Hannibal recalls Will speaking of the man they suspected as their arsonist. *“If their suspect was in custody, then who?”*

Mischa licks his lips and says, *“His son.”*

“Are they certain?” Hannibal asks, his grip tightening around his coffee cup.

“I believe so. I didn’t hear much more, except that they pulled him over on a routine traffic stop and they have him in custody now.”

Hannibal parts his lips to say something, but stops himself as Beverly Katz pokes her head into the waiting room and smiles at both men.

“Hello, Detective Katz,” Hannibal greets her.

“Hi there, Lieutenant.”

“Please, call me Hannibal.”

“Only if you call me Beverly, or Bev. You feel up to answering some questions?”

“Of course.” Hannibal shares a brief look with Mischa and asks, “Should my brother excuse himself?”

“Nah, Mischa can stay,” Beverly says with a grin, flipping her hair over her shoulder.

“How is Will?” Hannibal asks.

“He’s a grumpy ass, as per usual. They want to do some imaging of his brain to make sure everything’s alright in there,” Beverly takes a seat across from Hannibal and asks, “Would you please tell me what happened this morning at Will’s apartment?”

Hannibal doesn’t know how much Will told his partner, whether he told her they spent the night together or just skipped over that part entirely. He regards her for a moment, then says, “I gave Will a ride to his apartment building. We approached the door to his apartment and Will was in the process of unlocking it when I smelled smoke.”

“You smelled smoke. Will said he didn’t.”

“My sense of smell is very acute,” Hannibal says. “The scent of smoke and what few details Will told me about his case led me to believe that his apartment was likely on fire, but I was too late.”

“Too late?” Beverly asks.

“To stop him from opening the door. When you introduce oxygen to a fire that is dying, it’s much like a person taking a gasping breath when they’ve been deprived of air for too long. It creates what’s called a backdraft. An explosion of flames and gas, essentially.”

“Will said you put yourself between him and the blast.”

“I did,” Hannibal agrees, and he had done so without a second thought. Better to have the fire hit him than Will.

Beverly looks at him with an unreadable expression for several moments, then smiles to express her approval and points over her shoulder towards the hallway. “You should go see him. I promised him that you’re fine, but he’ll want to see for himself.”

Hannibal nods and gets up from his seat, walking down the hallway towards Will’s room.

--

Beverly Katz is many things, but willing to forget a bet isn’t one of them, if the sharp, amused look in her eyes is anything to go by.

“They definitely got together last night,” Mischa says, once he’s certain Hannibal is well out of range of overhearing. “I suppose that means I lost.”

Beverly grins and holds out her hand with the palm up. “You definitely lost.”

“In all fairness, I helped myself lose,” Mischa sighs, reaching into his back pocket for his wallet. He pulls out a twenty-dollar bill and holds it between them, just out of Beverly’s reach. “Will you allow me to buy you a drink sometime, Detective Katz?”

Beverly leans forward to snatch the twenty from his fingers and stuffs it into the pocket of her jacket. Then she smiles and leans back in her chair, crossing one leg over the other. “You seem like the type of guy that could get a girl into a lot of trouble.”

“Only the best kinds, I promise.”

Beverly shakes her head and laughs. “Let me deal with the shitstorm that’s about to happen over this case and then I’ll think about it.”

--

Will knows the instant his heart leaps in his chest that hearing secondhand that Hannibal is alive and well and seeing for himself that Hannibal is alive and well are two completely different things.

“Stetler, please step aside for the lieutenant,” Will says to defuse the officer standing in Hannibal’s way. It’s comical, really, when Stetler is at least a head shorter than Hannibal is and has no awareness of the predator he’s standing face to face with. Will can’t really blame him. That pleasant, patient smile fooled him at first glance too.

Stetler looks over his shoulder at Will, seems like he’s considering it, then nods. “Is it alright if I make a coffee run?”

“Go for it.”

Hannibal does a semi-awkward dance with Stetler in the doorway, the majority of the awkwardness coming from Stetler, and Will can't help but laugh. He tries, and fails, to smother it behind his hand.

"I'm glad you found that amusing," Hannibal says with a smile, walking over to the hospital bed to stand beside it. "How are you feeling?"

"Like I want to get out of here and sleep for the rest of the day," Will replies honestly. He's been poked and prodded more than he'll ever care to be, and seeing Hannibal now makes him want to be alone with him, anywhere but here. "They want to do scans of my brain to see what went haywire, I guess."

"What do you want, Will?"

I want to go home. They're the words on the tip of Will's tongue, but he realizes how foolish they'll sound now. Everything he owns was burnt to a crisp. The weight of it feels like a heavy blanket over his chest, and his smile fades. "I don't know," he says, looking down at his hands as he plays absently with the edge of the hospital blanket.

He doesn't have to look up to know that Hannibal is regarding him with that same patient gaze. "What are your plans for when they release you?"

"I'll have to go back to work and deal with the shitstorm that just happened. Place an insurance claim for all of the worldly possessions that were destroyed," Will sighs, looking out the window of his hospital room. "Find a new place to live."

"You're welcome to stay with me," Hannibal says, and Will can hear the sincerity in his voice as clear as a bell. Will looks at Hannibal and wonders why everything feels so easy, why they've meshed together so seamlessly. Staying with Hannibal feels like the right thing to do, even with the myriad of reasons it should feel like the wrong thing to do hovering in the back of Will's thoughts, and he *really* wants to say yes.

"I shouldn't," is what Will says instead.

“Either of the guest rooms are available, if you don’t wish to stay in the master.”

The words at the end go unspoken, but Will hears them all the same -- *with me.* It’s considerate of Hannibal, to once again place no expectations on Will and to offer him multiple options that might be suitable. Will considers the man standing just a foot from him, who put himself between Will and an explosion of flames. In the light, Hannibal’s eyes are amber and the look in them is difficult to read.

“Can I give it some thought?” Will asks.

“Of course.”

Will might be imagining it, but he swears there’s a flicker of sadness that passes over Hannibal’s features, gone as quickly as any other of his microexpressions would be. The man walks around to the other side of the bed and pulls a chair over from its spot beneath the window. He sets it beside Will’s bed and takes a seat.

Will isn’t sure what he’s so afraid of. Perhaps the attachment forming between him and Hannibal, the clear thread stitching them together and pulling tight, or maybe the fact that he wants nothing else but to give himself over completely to it.

“I’m sorry.”

“For what, exactly?”

“I feel like I’ve dragged you into my world.”

“Your world intersects closely with my own,” Hannibal says with a smile. “And there’s nothing that has occurred that you should apologize for. You’re a victim just as the families were.”

“I had a gut feeling about who started the fires and I couldn’t follow through with it,” Will replies, scrubbing his hand over the stubble on his cheek and chin. “Becoming a victim was practically my own fault.”

“Did you know for certain who the arsonist was?”

“No. I had a theory.”

“A theory that I’m assuming couldn’t be validated until you located the person that it pertained to?”

“Yes,” Will says. “We had what we thought was the person responsible in custody, but I had a feeling we were wrong. That something wasn’t right.”

Something wasn’t right. It’s apparent now that Francis Dolarhyde had been trying to protect his son by turning himself in and claiming responsibility. Whether he approved of what Ben was doing or not, Will doesn’t know, but he’s almost certain that unlike Francis, Reba had no idea.

Hannibal changes the subject then, and while they wait for the nurse to collect Will for imaging, Hannibal keeps his mind occupied with stories from working as a firefighter and throws in a few embarrassing ones about Mischa when he was younger. He keeps Will’s thoughts preoccupied until the nurse comes to get him, which is something Will is painfully grateful for.

Will finds out after MRI that he has mild encephalitis, which was aggravated by hitting his head and subsequently caused the brief seizure. He’s prescribed a course of anti-inflammatory drugs and told to rest and drink plenty of fluids for at least a week.

“I don’t have to stay overnight then?” Will asks the doctor once she’s done explaining.

“I’d really like it if you would, but nobody is forcing you, Mr. Graham.”

Will doesn’t like the prospect of sitting in the hospital all night. He’s got too much to do. He glances over at Hannibal, who has been with him for the past few hours without complaint, and dark eyes meet his.

“I’d like to be released.”

The doctor nods and says, “I’ll have your discharge instructions printed up.” She turns her attention to Hannibal then. “Promise me you’ll make sure he gets a lot of rest.”

“I promise,” Hannibal says, the corners of his mouth quirked up in an amused smile.

Seemingly satisfied with this, she turns and leaves the room. Will sighs and looks to Hannibal. “I’m ready to get out of here.”

“I’ll take you wherever you wish to go, Will.”

--

After he’s released from the hospital, Hannibal takes Will back to his apartment building, which seems like a terrible idea, but Hannibal asks Will to trust him and so Will does. He’s dressed in Mischa’s clothes this time, because Mischa suspected he would need something to wear when they released him. They’re closer in height and build, and every piece of clothing feels more expensive than Will even wants to consider. The jacket and scarf are especially warm, and Will finds himself dozing off as they drive, the side of his forehead pressed to the cool window.

“Will?”

The sound of his name pulls Will into wakefulness, just barely. He blinks a few times and looks at Hannibal questioningly.

“I thought you might like to pick up your car,” Hannibal says as they pull up in the Bentley and stop behind Will’s broken down Toyota.

Will looks at Hannibal, one eyebrow raised. “I still need to replace the starter. It’s not going to--” Will pauses as he realizes what Hannibal means. “You had someone fix my car?”

“I know a very good mechanic who owed me a favor. He said he had to unlock it with unconventional methods, but he locked it once he was done.” Hannibal smiles and nods his head towards Will’s car. “It seemed like the more reasonable alternative to buying you a new one.”

Somewhere deep down Will knows that if Hannibal thought he would react well to a new car, then there would be a new car sitting in the parking lot. He’s learned enough about Hannibal to know that the man is extravagant, dramatic, and unconcerned with spending money on Will for whatever reason, and Hannibal has apparently learned enough about him to know that the gesture of fixing Will’s car means far more to him.

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

Will licks his lips and rests his hand on the car door’s handle, looking towards his car. “I’m going to try to handle things today that need to be handled. I, uh… I need some time.”

“Of course,” Hannibal says, and Will hears some rustling that makes him look up. In between Hannibal’s thumb and index finger is a house key. “My offer still stands, Will. If you need a place to stay, even temporarily, please take advantage. I’d like to know you’re safe.”

Will takes the key from Hannibal without a word and puts it in the pocket of his (Mischa's) jacket. He knows he should say something else, but the words die in his throat when he meets Hannibal's gaze and sees the patience and devotion and the darkness lurking beneath. He feels.... Safe. Wanted. Desired.

There's a very real possibility that he's falling in love with Hannibal Lecter.

Hannibal turns and leans across to close the space between them, resting his hand on Will's cheek as he brings their lips together. Will wonders if he's still touch-starved or if his body will react this way to Hannibal always, like every nerve is on fire and screaming for more. He parts his lips for Hannibal's tongue, inviting him to devour as he sees fit, and Will knows he won't be able to think of anything else.

--

Will ends up going to Bev's apartment and buying a laptop on the way there. Luckily, he's already got a key and when he texts her to ask if he can hang out there for a bit, she enthusiastically replies with *'Hell yes! What kind of ice cream do you want?'*

It's a productive afternoon. He submits a claim with his insurance company for the damages to the apartment and to replace his destroyed possessions, calls Jack to talk with him about the case (which ends promptly with a, "I don't want to hear from you until you've rested for at least 24 hours. We've got the kid in custody."), and cleans Bev's apartment from top to bottom.

He's in the middle of ordering Chinese food when Bev comes home with two grocery store bags. She looks even more exhausted than he feels, and she thanks and teases him for cleaning before she disappears to take a shower.

Will makes a bowl of chocolate ice cream and sits down on the couch with it, channel surfing for something to put on until it becomes obvious that all of Bev's 294 channels aren't playing anything worth watching and he settles for a documentary that he's already seen.

“You know I love our girly sleepovers...” Beverly starts as she plops down onto the couch beside him, a spoon in her hand.

Will looks at Bev and spoons more ice cream into his mouth, waiting for her to get to the point.

“But you’re shoveling down ice cream before dinner like you got broken up with. And you’re here, not with Hannibal.” Bev frowns and digs her spoon into Will’s ice cream. “Is everything alright?”

“Yeah, actually,” Will says after a few moments of thoughtful silence. “Everything is alright with Hannibal. Better than alright.”

“And?”

“He gave me a key to his place.”

Bev’s eyes widen and she punches Will’s shoulder. “That’s what you’re moping about?”

“I guess. I should be moping about my apartment burning down or my inability to catch the person responsible before it happened, but my thoughts lately are… Hannibal-centric.”

“Is that a bad thing? I mean, I’m sorry if I pushed too hard for you to get together,” Bev says with a frown. “You just seemed happier than you’ve been in a long time, since you met him, and Mischa said the same about Hannibal.”

Will actually appreciates Bev’s direct approach to things. Left to his own devices, he probably would have talked himself out of getting involved with Hannibal. Hell, he almost had.

“You pushed just enough, I promise.” Will smiles and scrubs his hand over his jaw. “I’m being anxious over nothing.”

“You wouldn’t be Will Graham if you didn’t overthink things,” Bev agrees, taking a heaping spoonful of ice cream from the bowl.

When the doorbell rings, Will gets up to grab their food and pay the delivery guy. They eat while half-watching a documentary on the History channel, and after it ends Bev lets out a frustrated huff and throws an egg roll at him.

Will barely manages to catch it before it hits his face. “What was that for?”

“Because you may be the one with the empathy thing, but I can see it all over your face.”

“See what all over my face?” Will asks, even though he knows the answer already.

Bev levels a look at him that says she knows that he knows and Will sets his near empty container of beef and broccoli on the coffee table.

“Do you have a spare toothbrush I can use?”

“Yeah, of course. I have a whole drawer full of them from the dentist.” Bev sets her Chinese food down as well and gets up from the couch, stretching her arms over her head. “Do you need a ride over to his place?”

“No, actually,” Will laughs, knowing already that Bev is going to enjoy this tidbit of information immensely, “Hannibal had someone fix my car while we were in the hospital.”

“He did *what?* Holy shit he’s got it bad for you.”

“You know I’ll be there tomorrow. I have questions for Ben Dolarhyde,” Will says as he follows Bev to the bathroom.

“Don’t let it ruin your night,” Bev replies with a grin and a wink, handing over a toothbrush still in the packaging and a tube of toothpaste. “And my door is still open if you need to come back for any reason, you know? You’ve got the key, just let yourself in and crash on the couch.”

Will wonders what he did to deserve an excellent friend like Beverly Katz in his life. Whatever it was, he’s glad for it.

Chapter End Notes

Stay tuned until next time, when Will and Hannibal finally get around to boning. Seriously I'd never be able to write slow burn fic.

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

“Hannibal?” Will says. When the man doesn’t wake, he takes a few steps closer and repeats his name.

Hannibal stirs then, opening his eyes and blinks a few times as his eyes focus on Will. He looks surprised at first that Will is there, like for a split second he’s considering the possibility that he might be still dreaming. Then his expression softens entirely. “Hello, Will.”

“I’m sorry for just letting myself in,” Will says, suddenly feeling sheepish under Hannibal’s sleepy, warm gaze.

“I’m pleased that you did.”

Chapter Notes

Welp, here we are at the end of my first multichaptered fic I've ever completed! It's been a wild ride and I have to say, I really appreciate all the positive, kind words that Fannibals have blessed me with. I have a few other projects I'm working on, so hopefully I'll have those up soon.

Beta'd by MelodiousPoison. Thank you!

Will does his best to make himself presentable, which almost works because he’s still wearing Mischa’s clothes. The illusion of being put-together is there, even with the dark circles under his eyes standing stark against his skin and his stubble nearing the point of becoming a beard. Otherwise he looks almost alive.

As Will pulls up to 5 Chandler Square and shuts off his car, he sits there until the air around him cools. He takes a few deep breaths and opens the door, sliding out of the car and walking up to Hannibal’s impressive house to ring the doorbell.

It takes a minute of waiting at the door before Will wonders if he should press it again, then another few minutes before he wonders if Hannibal is even home. He feels increasingly conspicuous, standing outside of a very nice house in an upscale neighborhood at just past 9 o'clock at night, waiting for the owner of that house to answer the door for Will, who is well-dressed but undeniably homeless.

He thinks of the house key still sitting snug in his jacket pocket and finds himself reaching for it, fingers slipping against the soft inner-lining. He finds it easily enough, tucked into the seam at the very bottom. The metal is warm to the touch as he wraps his fingers around it.

Hannibal did tell him to take advantage. As much it goes against everything he believes, Will puts the key into the lock and turns it until it clicks.

The house is just as immaculate as he remembers it, even though it's mostly dark. The faint smell of Hannibal's cooking fills him with nostalgia for reasons he can't explain. He quietly passes through the kitchen, wondering if Hannibal entertained guests tonight or if he ate alone. Everything looks so pristine, there's no way to tell.

Some small, miserable part of him wants to sit on the kitchen floor and feel bad for himself until Hannibal finds him that way and somehow makes it better. He ignores it and continues investigating.

Will finds his feet carrying him to the library, listening for any signs of life in the house. Hannibal doesn't seem like the type to sleep early, but he knows that the man had the last three days off. He'll have to go to work tomorrow, probably.

As Will enters the library, a quick glance around reveals Hannibal in an armchair across the room. The man is sound asleep, head lolled to the side and book lying open across his stomach. He's wearing a pair of dark sleep pants and a cream colored sweater. He looks peaceful like this, expression relaxed and open, bowed lips parted just slightly, and as Will gets closer, he can't help but stare, transfixed.

He knows he should make noise and wake Hannibal up. He's not expecting Will to be here. Startling him could lead to injuries for one or both of them.

“Hannibal?” Will says. When the man doesn’t wake, he takes a few steps closer and repeats his name.

Hannibal stirs then, opening his eyes and blinking a few times as his eyes focus on Will. He looks surprised at first that Will is there, like for a split second he’s considering the possibility that he might be still dreaming. Then his expression softens entirely. “Hello, Will.”

“I’m sorry for just letting myself in,” Will says, suddenly feeling sheepish under Hannibal’s sleepy, warm gaze.

“I’m pleased that you did.”

Will believes him. “What are we doing?”

“That all depends on what you want, I think,” Hannibal says, picking up the book lying across his stomach. He closes it and sets it on the table beside the chair. “Tell me what I can do, Will.”

“I don’t know,” Will replies honestly, closing the space between them, just close enough to reach out and touch. It feels powerful, having the height advantage in this brief moment, standing over Hannibal and observing the obsequious nature of the beast. “I’m sorely tempted to start asking for the things I want.”

Is it really asking if you know he’ll give them to you?

“The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it,” Hannibal says, looking up at Will with dark eyes brimming with desire and adoration. “Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself.”

“Why am I not at all surprised that you just quoted Oscar Wilde?”

Hannibal laughs, catching Will's hand in his and pressing a kiss to his knuckles. "You'll have to forgive me. My brain doesn't easily recall Dante when I've just woken up."

Will doesn't pull away, instead he allows his hand to be held captive in Hannibal's own. He doesn't know if he could want anything more than this. Everything else seems trivial.

"I want to go upstairs," Will admits, his heart thundering inside his chest.

"It's a start."

"Don't patronize me."

"Forgive me."

Hannibal smiles and stands, but doesn't release Will's hand. He leads them both through the house just like that, hand in hand, up the stairs and towards the bedroom.

There is no light in the bedroom except for the night light coming from the master bathroom. Hannibal turns to Will as they cross the threshold, exhaling softly like he's about to say something. Before he has the chance, Will grabs his face and kisses him hard on the mouth. Hannibal's lips and tongue meets his with equal enthusiasm, soft and slick, hands immediately tearing at Will's clothes, undoing buttons and zippers all while kissing Will breathless.

Hannibal's hands slide inside Will's jacket, pushing it off his shoulders and down his arms in one graceful motion. Will tilts his head back to look at him, noses brushing as they share a few shaky breaths between them.

"You don't like me wearing your brother's clothes," Will observes, the nonplussed look Hannibal gives him making his cock twitch in his (*Mischa's*) pants. Reading Hannibal is

becoming more second nature to him every moment, and fuck if it doesn't feel strangely powerful to be able to see the man so clearly.

"Clever boy," Hannibal whispers reverently, eyes half-lidded. Will could swear they're the color of whiskey. "What shall I do with you?"

"Exactly what you were doing is a good start," Will says, hissing sharply when Hannibal's hand finds one hard nipple and pinches it viciously through his shirt. He bites back the first words that come to mind, *The other one too, please.* Instead he curls his fingers into the cashmere fabric of Hannibal's sweater, lips parting into a broken moan when Hannibal seems to read his mind, fingers tweaking his other nipple equally hard.

"Your reactions to pain are beautiful," Hannibal says, mouthing against the cut of Will's jaw and continuing down his neck as he works quickly with deft fingers to undo Will's pants. Will's face heats right from the tips of his ears, so unused to being called beautiful that he falters as Hannibal pushes Will's pants and briefs off his hips and down his legs. A gentle, "Will?" snaps him out of his thoughts, and Will steps out of the pants only to be lifted into the air with Hannibal's hands under his thighs and dumped onto the soft bed.

Between one heartbeat and the next he inhales a surprised breath and Hannibal climbs on top of him, solid and warm and kissing Will with what feels like every intention to devour him. Will tugs at Hannibal's too-soft sweater impatiently, his hands finding warm skin and hard muscle beneath, and when they break apart, Will pants against his mouth, "Off. Now."

Hannibal smiles and leans back as much as Will allows him to, both pulling the sweater over his back and then off entirely. The fabric pools onto Will's chest, soft where it lies against his heated skin. He can't help but gather it to his nose and inhale, watching as Hannibal slides his sleep pants down his hips, his cock springing free, thick and red and wet at the tip.

They share a look then, and Will's chest hurts from the intensity of it. Will can't help but stare -- Hannibal looks stunning like this; completely naked, hair askew in all directions, cock standing proudly erect between his thighs. Will pushes his fingers into Hannibal's chest hair and finds enough voice to ask, "How do you want me?" He hopes that it's enough for Hannibal to understand what Will is offering.

Hannibal's expression doesn't change, and for a moment Will thinks something might be wrong, until the man leans forward and presses a kiss to Will's swollen lips. "In every way imaginable."

Will's dick twitches and leaks against his lower belly, muscles clenched tight against a sudden wave of arousal. He whispers against Hannibal's mouth, "On my knees, clutching the sheets, back arched while you fuck me?" Oh, the sound that Hannibal makes, a breathy, tormented sound that sends a shiver of need straight through Will's body from head to toe. "That's what I want."

"Anything, Will."

Hannibal leans across to dig inside the drawer on the bedside table, and Will sees the curve of his armpit and the dark hair there, wondering what the man would do if Will stuck his nose there and inhaled deeply.

"On your hands and knees," Hannibal says when he returns with glass jar of lube in one hand and a condom in the other. The barest hint of consequence is there, an *or else* lingering between them which causes Will to shiver. He turns over and lifts himself up on his hands and knees, regretting the choice of position only because he can't see what Hannibal is doing.

A hand settles on Will's thigh, the only warning before wet fingers press against his hole. The lube is warm, probably from Hannibal rubbing it between his hands, and there is almost no resistance as one finger slips inside.

More. Will isn't sure if he says it out loud or not, but Hannibal obliges regardless, adding a second finger shortly after the first. He starts to thrust them in and out in a steady rhythm, stretching Will slower than he wants, but as fast as he knows he's ready for after being almost celibate for a year. "Hannibal." Will curls his fingers into fists against the soft sheets. "More."

"Are you certain? You're trembling from just this," Hannibal replies, crooking his fingers inside Will like he's deliberately searching for something. When he finds it, Will's body bows and his mouth falls open on a moan, and he can practically see the self-satisfaction on Hannibal's face. He doesn't rub against Will's prostate on every thrust of his fingers, instead leaving him to guess when he's going to feel that jolt of electricity straight through his spine,

and after what feels like an eternity of this (but is most likely only a minute or two) Will decides he's had enough.

"Hannibal."

Hannibal makes a low hum in his throat and adds a third finger, stretching Will wide around them. "Yes?"

"I want you inside me," Will pants against the sheets, laying his forearms down and pressing his forehead to one, the skin on his neck and shoulders and down his back burning hot, fire alight in every naked inch of him that Hannibal is no doubt devouring with his eyes.

Hannibal removes his fingers slowly, rubbing the pad of his thumb around the rim of Will's hole. Then his touch is gone altogether and Will hears the sound of Hannibal tearing open the condom, the soft snap as he rolls it onto his cock, and then finally he feels the fat head of it pressed against him as Hannibal pushes inside.

One slow, slick thrust seats Hannibal's cock to the base. Will arches his back and bites into his forearm to stifle the desperate cry that wells up in his throat.

Hannibal pushes his fingers into Will's hair and begins a steady rhythm, pulling back until his cockhead nearly slips free and thrusting deep, filling Will completely. Will squeezes his eyes shut and bites harder, cock twitching and leaking onto the bed beneath him.

Hannibal curls his fingers into Will's hair, grips his curls tight and pulls his head up. His lips brush against the shell of Will's ear. "Let me hear you, Will."

Something breaks inside Will then, like a rubber band stretched to the point of snapping. He cries out, thighs trembling as Hannibal holds his head up with an iron grip and fucks into him hard and fast with each thrust. There's a fire in his lower belly, building and aching like a bruise, and when Hannibal tells him to reach for his cock, accent thick and breath warm in Will's ear, Will wants to tell him no. He wants to come just like this, speared open and otherwise untouched, but Hannibal tells him again and it's not a request. Will's hand reaches obediently for his dick, wrapping his fingers around it.

Hannibal rewards him by angling just so, brushing over his prostate after a few deep thrusts, and Will manages to pump himself twice before he lets go, biting his bottom lip hard enough to draw blood as he shoots stripes of come onto the sheets. Hannibal fucks him through his orgasm, moaning words against Will's temple that don't sound like English at all.

"Ask for anything in the world that I can give you," Hannibal sighs, "and it's yours, Will."

"Bite me," Will swallows, proud of himself for being able to speak at all,and he touches the mostly healed spot on his shoulder, bracing himself with his other arm, "here."

Hannibal does exactly that, sinking his teeth into Will's shoulder as he thrusts deep and stills, exhaling heavily through his nose as he comes. Will shivers and imagines the latex barrier disappearing, Hannibal marking him inside and out, bruising him and making him bleed and filling him so full he forgets anything else.

Eventually Hannibal releases him, the cool air ghosting over the fresh wound on his shoulder, his chest heaving against Will's back. They spend some time like that trying to catch their breath, with Hannibal's cock softening inside him until it slips free. Hannibal releases his grip on Will's hair and rubs at his sore scalp, and gently guides Will onto his side, away from the impressive wet spot.

"Should we shower?" Will asks, hoping that the answer is no. His eyelids feels heavy and he doesn't think he could make it to the bathroom without collapsing. His limbs feel unuseable, completely jelly-like and uncooperative, and he really wants to sleep.

Hannibal moves up behind Will and pulls the covers over both of them, wrapping one arm around Will's waist. "It can wait until morning."

Will falls asleep within moments.

--

About five minutes after waking up, four of which are spent enjoying the comfortable warmth of Hannibal holding him as he sleeps, Will climbs out of bed and stretches his arms over his head. He's sore in places he hasn't been in a long time, his shoulder is throbbing, and there's a good chance that he's going to fall when he tries to walk, but he feels happier in that moment than he probably has a right to be.

A quick glance back at the cause of said happiness reveals that the man is watching him with an appreciative smile.

"I'm sorry if I woke you," Will says, restraining himself from touching the bite on his shoulder.

"I'm a light sleeper," Hannibal replies as he sits up and rubs at the side of his face, the sheet pooling around his waist. "Shall we shower together, Will?"

"Yes, please. I feel disgusting."

"You look radiant."

Will wonders if he'll ever grow used to the ease with which Hannibal compliments him. "Do you have to work today?"

"I do," Hannibal sighs. "You're welcome to stay here, if you'd like."

"I have to go to the station."

"Surely they wouldn't ask that you go back to work so soon."

“They’re not making me go back,” Will says. “I’m making myself go back. They have the son of our original suspect in custody and he might be responsible for setting the fires at all three locations.”

“If you must.” Hannibal crawls across the open space between them and presses a chaste kiss to Will’s neck, just to the right of the bite. “I should have dressed this properly. If it bothers you at all, tell me.”

“I will,” Will says with a nod, then heads into the bathroom and starts up Hannibal’s shower, standing in front of it as he waits for the water to heat up. He climbs in when he sees steam and sighs as he steps under the enormous showerhead, the heat a blessing on his sore muscles. He stays like that, just letting the warmth of the water wash over him, until Hannibal joins him a minute later, silent as he wraps Will in his arms and kisses him until his lungs ache for air.

When they finally part, Will wipes water from his eyes and laughs. “Would it be completely weird to say that this is the most enjoyable shower I’ve ever had?”

Hannibal makes a low, rumbling sound against the shell of Will’s ear, considering this for a few moments as he soaps up Will’s chest with his hands.

“You’re thinking about all the ways I’ll make you filthy when you come home to me.”

It’s not a question, and Will lets the thought of *coming home* to Hannibal warm the parts of him that the hot water can’t.

--

Will spends fifteen minutes watching Benjamin Dolarhyde from the other side of the glass as Bev questions him. He denies everything with perfect impassivity, including taking his father’s truck and setting the fires, and he even smiles when Bev asks if he set fire to Will’s apartment.

“I don’t know who that is and I didn’t set any fires.”

Jack claps a hand on Will’s shoulder and clears his throat, startling Will out of his thoughts. Will lifts his hand to adjust his glasses and realizes that they’re not there. They’re melted plastic in what used to be his apartment.

“They say madness skips a generation,” he says, itching the bridge of his nose instead.

Jack makes a displeased noise and squeezes Will’s shoulder, then releases it. “The people who say that must believe that shit doesn’t roll downhill, too. Has he said anything useful?”

“No. I could tell you that I think he’s lying, but if he is, he’s incredibly talented at it.” Will watches as Bev gets up from the table and exits the room. He can’t see her face, but the stiff line of her shoulders tells him that she’s frustrated. “Or he’s got the same disassociation that his dad had and he honestly doesn’t believe that he set the fires. That some entity inside of him did.”

“What is Ben Dolarhyde’s ‘Great Red Dragon’, I wonder?” Jack asks. “Can you find out?”

“I can try, but he’s an intelligent kid. If he doesn’t want me to know that there’s a demon on his back whispering in his ear, there’s not a lot I can do except try to trick him into telling me.”

“I need you to try. We’re going to release Francis Dolarhyde.”

Will figured as much. They can only hold the man for 48 hours without charging him for anything. “He doesn’t want to confess anymore, I’m guessing.”

“His lawyer advised against it,” Jack sighs, making a fist and pressing it against the wall next to the window. “I need you to try to get me something I can use.”

Will licks his lips and nods. As he walks out of the observation room, he spots Bev standing in the hallway talking to Price. He meets her eyes for a second and then opens the door to the interrogation room.

Ben raises his eyes as Will enters the room. There is no recognition there, and Will is certain that they haven't met before this moment. "Who are you?"

"I'm Detective Will Graham."

"Oh, right. Detective Katz asked me if I burned down your apartment," Ben says, leaning back in his chair. It's a posture that shows openness and honesty, in most cases. "I didn't, so we can get that question out of the way."

"Great." Will walks over to the table and sits in the chair across from Ben. "Will you answer some questions for me?"

"I will."

"Do you play football?"

"I do. I'm a senior now and I've played since I was a freshman." Ben doesn't have any trouble meeting Will's eyes, and he exudes the kind of confidence befitting a high school football player. Not quarterback confidence, but maybe running back or wide receiver.

"What size shoe do you wear?" Will asks, folding his hands on the table in front of him.

Ben's eyebrows knit together in confusion. "What does that have to do with anything?"

"Please just answer the question."

“Size 12.”

The same shoe size as Francis, which means he could have been wearing his father’s shoes when he set fire to the first house. “Where were you last night between 9 p.m. and 4 a.m.?” Will asks.

“I was at my friend Abigail’s house for a party. Her parents are out of town for two weeks, so all our friends have been hanging out a lot.” Ben crosses his arms over his chest. “We’re all going to graduate soon. We’re trying to spend as much time together before we go to different colleges.”

“You were picked up on a traffic stop. What happened there?”

“Abigail was driving me home because I woke up drunk and I didn’t want my mom and dad to find out. I guess she was speeding.”

“Was Abigail drunk?”

“No, but when the cops ran my ID, they said I had to come with them.”

“Were you also at Abigail’s this past Tuesday and Thursday night?”

“Yeah, and she’ll tell you so. I can give you her number if you want.”

Will feels a sinking hole opening in the pit of his stomach. Inside it is the realization that Benjamin Dolarhyde didn’t set fire to either house. There is no beast on his back, not like his father.

Francis Dolarhyde is their arsonist.

“What do you remember about your father’s episode, Ben?” Will asks.

Ben frowns and shakes his head, a touch of panic in his eyes. “Please don’t make me talk about that.”

“It might save lives.”

There’s a long pause where Ben looks like he’s considering it, then he sighs and asks, “Do you have any idea what it’s like to have your mom hold you close while she’s begging your dad to stop pouring gas? To not light us on fire?”

Will wants to say that no, he doesn’t, but he thinks he *could* know if he tried hard enough to imagine it. “Is that what you remember?”

“Yeah. I also remember looking at him and thinking, ‘that’s not my dad’. He told me before my mom came into the room that he was the Great Red Dragon and that to be reborn, he had to burn us alive.”

Will swallows heavily and stands up. “That’s all the questions I have for right now.”

“Do I have to stay here?”

“Just for a little longer.”

Will walks to the door and as he opens it, Ben says, “Hey, Detective Graham.”

“Yes?”

“Do you think my dad is responsible?”

“Whoever was responsible wanted to make sure people died in the blaze,” Will says, deflecting the question as best he can. “They wanted to kill the families inside to suit a purpose.”

“But you’re not dead. Maybe the person who set your apartment on fire didn’t want to kill you.”

The thought had crossed his mind and it’s a worrying one. Will doesn’t respond, just pushes open the door and leaves the room.

--

“What’s this?” Jack asks as Will drops two orange prescription bottles on his desk.

“They’re Dolarhyde’s pills,” Will says, waving his hand towards them. “The prescription is expired. Over a year ago.”

“He’s had these bottles for a year?”

“Yes, but half of each bottle is gone. He either took half of them and gave up or he’s only taking them when he thinks he needs them.” Will takes a deep breath and realizes he’s been pacing Jack’s office. He stops and stands in front of the desk. “And maybe they worked for a while, but when his mental state started going south faster than pills could handle, he set fire to both houses to try and appease the Red Dragon. If we hadn’t found him, he would’ve set another fire or he would’ve finished what he started originally. Once we showed up, he figured confessing was the only option that would save his family from the dragon.”

Jack looks at him and picks up one of the bottles, examining the expiration date for himself. He shakes his head, then looks at Will. “Holy shit.”

“There’s one problem.”

“You know how I feel about problems, Will.”

“Francis was here all night. There’s no way he’s the one who burned down my apartment.”

“It might be a completely separate incident,” Jack says, setting the pill bottle down. “We’re going to treat it like it’s unrelated. When we find out who did it, we’ll worry. Until then, we’re charging Francis Dolarhyde for arson and involuntary manslaughter. We’ll see what his lawyer has to say to that.”

“I can get started on looking for evidence as to who--”

“You will not.”

“What?”

“You’re too close to that case, and you’re in Homicide. Nobody died, so you’re not going to be lead on this one.”

Will opens his mouth to protest and Jack gives him a look that tells him an argument won’t be welcome, even if he did just present Jack enough evidence to bring a case against Francis Dolarhyde. He exhales heavily and nods, resigned to accept Jack’s decision, and turns to leave the office.

He makes it halfway down the hallway before he runs into Bev. “So?” she prompts him.

“Francis Dolarhyde is the arsonist.”

“Holy shit.”

“That’s what Jack said.”

Bev punches him in the shoulder. “You ready for this mountain of paperwork we’re going to have to do?”

Will groans and shakes his head. “Not at all.”

“What sealed the deal?”

“Take a coffee break with me.”

“You don’t have to tell me twice.”

--

Three Months Later

It took far longer to get Will to take a vacation than Hannibal would like to admit. The better part of six weeks, if he’s being honest with himself, but Will finally agreed, and even though they’re living together and they see each other almost every morning and evening, there is nothing quite like seeing Will glowing and thriving in the Costa Rican sun.

“I want to stay here forever,” he says one afternoon, laying out in the sun to dry off after swimming.

Hannibal marks his place in the book he’s reading and looks at Will. He learned that Will doesn’t react well when Hannibal offers to uproot everything to move wherever Will’s heart

wishes to live, so he stopped for the time being. Maybe one day he'll convince him to leave Baltimore for somewhere warmer, but for now their vacation will have to do.

Will gets up and walks over to Hannibal, swim shorts hanging low on his hips. When Hannibal tilts his head up, he sees Will's pleased smile and his clear blue eyes and he knows there will be nobody else in his lifetime that he will desire as much as he desires Will Graham.

Will bends down to press a kiss to Hannibal's lips. "I'll make us lunch."

Hannibal sighs against Will's mouth and makes a soft sound of agreement. "Would you like some assistance?"

"You always cook for me. Let me take care of you for once."

"Anything for you, Will."

"Good." Will grins and kisses Hannibal again. "I love you."

The words leave Hannibal speechless, and all he can do is stare after Will as he walks into the villa. While Hannibal had said them mere weeks after Will moved in with him, he didn't know at the time if he would ever hear them reciprocated. He wonders briefly if he's dreaming.

"Are you coming?" Will calls from the patio door.

Hannibal smiles and rises from his chair, following Will into the house. He grabs his phone off of the kitchen counter to check it for messages, unsurprised to see one from Mischa.

Hey big brother!

Hannibal types out a greeting and sends it.

Hello Mischa.

Bev says the apartment fire was ruled an accident.

Thank you for the update. They never considered you a suspect, did they?

Of course not. ;)

Hannibal breathes a sigh of relief. When the arson investigator reported that he couldn't determine the cause of the fire, the Baltimore PD had launched an investigation, and while they questioned Hannibal, they hadn't bothered to question Mischa.

Tell Will I said hi and I can't wait for the wedding.

"Who's that?" Will asks, looking over at Hannibal before he goes back to searching in the fridge.

"Mischa. He said to tell you hello," Hannibal replies, deleting his conversation with Mischa and locking the phone before he walks over to join Will in front of the refrigerator.

"Tell him I said hi back. And I change my mind. I think I do want your help with lunch."

Hannibal smiles and wraps an arm around Will's shoulders, pressing a kiss to his temple. "Let's make something together."

End Notes

I'm on Tumblr! I'm Dormchi there as well. Feel free to come say hi.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!